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COMMONWEAL

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Starbucks Catholicism?

Responses to Eugene McCarraher

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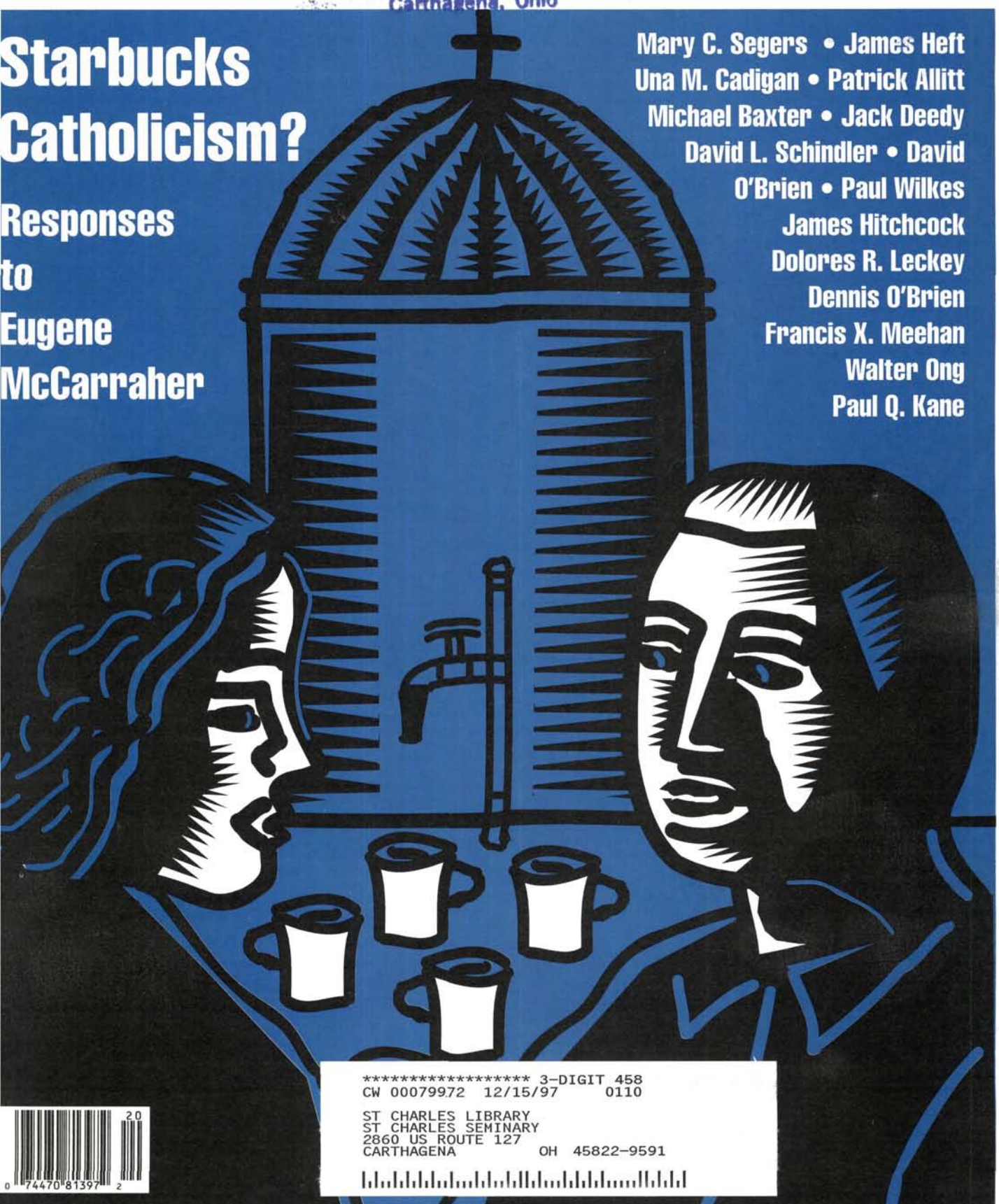

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COMMONWEAL

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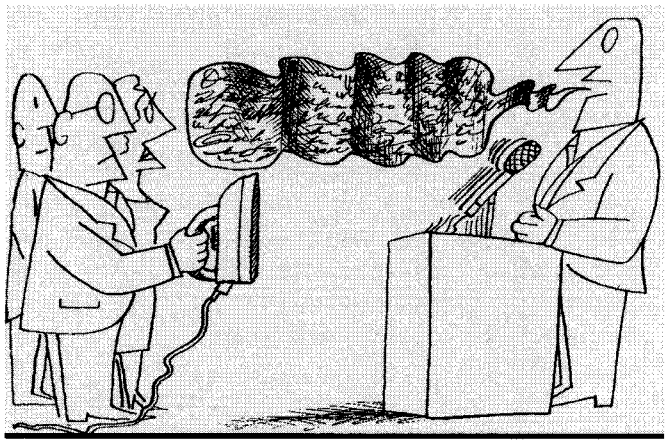

SMILE WHEN YOU SAY, 'STARBUCKS'
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To the Editors

On counting heads

The letter from Mary Beth Celio, director of research in the Archdiocese of Seattle, ["Numbers can mislead," September 12] has recently been brought to my attention. Ms. Celio claims (a) that I assured her and researchers in other dioceses that no diocese would be identified by name in our published articles; and (b) that our research methodology was flawed.

On the first point, Celio's allegation is simply false. Never did we assure Celio or anyone else that diocesan names would not be published. On the contrary, when the subject arose—which it rarely did—I always was completely honest and forthright about our intention to publish the names of the dioceses from which the data came. I have correspondence showing that the Catholic Research Forum asked us to consider suppressing the names of dioceses only *after* they saw what the results were. Celio, in particular, asked us to suppress the Seattle data only *after* it had already been published in the *American Sociological Review*. Nowhere does this correspondence mention some prior assurance of anonymity. I was shocked to read in *Commonweal* that a disagreement over whether or not to publish diocesan names has been transformed into a promise that we would not do so. No such assurance was ever given, and it is outrageous and hurtful for Celio to claim the contrary.

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At the time, we believed that publishing the diocesan names was necessary for readers to assess the accuracy, breadth, and validity of our research. To be honest, I now question the wisdom of that decision. It is difficult, if not impossible, for scholars to foresee all of the potential political ramifications of their research. I, for one, did not anticipate that this research would receive the amount of attention it has received. Knowing what I now know about the impact of our work, I am sympathetic to the suggestion that it might have been better to have tried to find a way to publish our results *sans* the names of the dioceses from which the data came. One's opinion on this matter, however, does not affect the fact that my colleagues and I always were open and honest at every stage in this research project.

As for methodology, Celio offers two criticisms. On the one hand, she suggests that the diocesan attendance counts are not of sufficiently good quality to warrant using them as we did. This is false. We assessed the quality of these data carefully; we evaluated the counting procedures used in each diocese and declined to report count data gathered from more than a dozen dioceses because they were of questionable quality. (For example, we did not report data from any diocese that estimated attendance rather than actually counting heads.) Indeed, we went to great lengths to ensure that the counts we used to calculate attendance rates were, if anything, *over*estimates of actual attendance. All the counts that we reported, including Seattle's, clearly were of high quality. This is testimony to the good work done by diocesan researchers across the country.

On the other hand, Celio argues that we used the wrong denominator in calculating Catholic attendance rates. She suggests that, instead of the population of *self-identified* Catholics in each diocese, we should have used either the population of *registered* Catholics or the population of Catholics *affiliated* with the church—this last estimated by using the number of baptisms and funerals in each diocese.

This criticism is misplaced. Our research was designed to test the accuracy of attendance rates generated by surveys. This is not a narrow academic matter. Such surveys form the basis of scholarly and popular understanding of U.S. church attendance.

In making such a test, it was necessary for us to use the *same* denominator that surveys use. The Protestant and Catholic attendance rates yielded by survey *always* are based on the respondents who *self-identify* as "Protestant" or "Catholic" whether or not they are formal members of a church, are registered with a parish, have ever been baptized, or have any other formal connection to a church. Hence, to compare self-reported attendance from surveys to actual attendance based on head counts, it was essential to use the number of self-identified Catholics in the denominator of the rates we calculated. Using the number of registered Catholics—or any other number—would have been analogous to comparing apples and oranges.

Hence, Celio's point that there are more self-identifed Catholics than appear on official lists of registered Catholics (and her arithmetic truism that using registered Catholics in the denominator would generate a higher attendance rate than we calculated using self-identified Catholics) is irrelevant. I can certainly see why someone might want to know the

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Fatal prescription

The Oregon Legislature gave voters another chance to decide whether or not the state's Death with Dignity Act was a big mistake. Apparently Oregonians think not. On November 4, the electorate voted 60-40 to keep the law permitting physician-assisted suicide on the books.

The act, first approved in a 1994 statewide referendum, was initially blocked by court action. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals eventually upheld the law, and this fall, the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal, having ruled last spring in cases from Washington and New York that laws governing end-of-life decisions should rest with the states. And rest it does with Oregon. In fact, the circuit court lifted the injunction even before the election, making physician-assisted suicide legal in Oregon on October 27.

Opponents of the measure have promised to return to the courts, and the governor of Oregon, though supporting the law, has said that the legislature will need to tighten several of its provisions. And the DEA has threatened to revoke the licenses of physicians to prescribe some drugs if the physicians violate federal narcotics laws. Nonetheless, some time very soon, a resident of Oregon who is diagnosed with a terminal illness and with less than six months to live will be able to ask a physician to prescribe a lethal dose of medication so that the patient can kill herself.

That Oregonians voted for the measure in 1994 and refused to rescind it now has been attributed to a libertarian streak in their characters, their pioneer origins, and an unchurched way-of-life. But it must also be said that the 1994 referendum was specially crafted to appeal to such voters. In restricting physician assistance to writing a prescription rather than giving a lethal injection to terminally ill persons, proponents of assisted suicide avoided one impediment that led voters in Washington and California to reject earlier attempts to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The strategy in Oregon appealed to patient autonomy and removed the physician from the appearance of direct killing, thereby avoiding the stigma of euthanasia. A lethal drug purchased at a drug store and taken by a patient at a time and place of his own choosing looked like a patient buying a gun and shooting himself—in short, Oregon's law was written to make the act appear more like suicide than euthanasia, thus obscuring the necessary involvement of others, especially physicians.

Whatever appealed to Oregon voters in 1994 seemed to appeal even more in 1997: The margin of victory increased by 10 percentage points. Some portion of that vote may have been triggered by the Oregon Catholic Conference's vigorous campaign to convince voters that the law should be repealed. That some Oregonians should object to such efforts by "outsiders" suggests that the character trait actually at work, apart from a visceral anti-Catholicism, may have been a naive insularity. Oregon can hardly be the first place in the United States to legalize physician-assisted suicide and not expect to become the focus of many contending forces; this was a moral as well as a legal decision of vital concern to the whole country and not simply to its own citizens. Indeed the Catholic church was not the only "outsider" in the campaign; proponents of the law received funds from George

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Soros, the international financier, for one example. Other opponents of the law included the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and an important insider, the *Oregonian*, the state's major newspaper.

The battle is not over. Having crafted a half-measure in Oregon, euthanasia proponents will soon be back at work.

How long before failed "suicide" attempts with prescription drugs will bring cries for the more "humane and compassionate" practice of lethal injections by physicians and nurses?

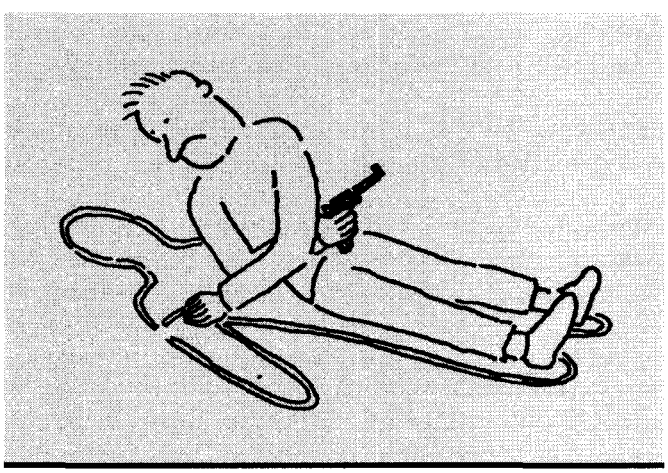
How long before end-of-life decisions are transformed into quality-of-life calculations, and the call for ever more compassion, lethal injections for the severely disabled and infants born seriously deformed or retarded?

How long before the law's claim to protect a patient's autonomy will give way to economic and social pressures on the old and the ailing poor to beg their physician for that fatal prescription?

The euthanasia lobby will move on to expand this lethal franchise and it is unlikely that this time they will settle for less than direct killing by physicians.

Oregon's law raises the most fundamental questions about the practice of medicine and about the capacity of our society to provide care, comfort, and spiritual solace to the old, the ailing, and the dying. Among the first lines of defense against the spread of euthanasia is the medical-care community itself. Physicians, nurses, and pharmacists—none of them are obliged to carry out a law that violates their ethical codes. Hospitals can forbid the practice in their domains, and health insurance and health-maintenance organizations can refuse to pay. The analogy may be overused, but it is clearly pertinent here: Hitler's euthanasia programs could never have been carried out if medical-care givers had refused to cooperate.

But what of our society and our culture? We must all pay attention to the plight, the fears, and anxieties of the old and the dying. We must never make them feel unwanted or leave them uncared for. Spiritual solace is not only the work of the churches, but of each of us. At the same time, as we age, each of us must take responsibility for coming to terms with our own mortality; we must set our own limits on medical practices and therapies that prolong both our pain and our dying.



In the political battles ahead, we should take care to frame debates that will persuade and not coerce, convince and not threaten. (Readers will remember a series of essays *Commonweal* published preceding the referenda in Washington [August 9, 1991], California [September 25, 1992], and Oregon [August 19, 1994] by Daniel Callahan, Carlos Gonzalez, Leon Kass, Alexander Capron, Albert Johnson, and Courtney Campbell; they remain among the most persuasive and cogent of arguments. Look back at them.) Coalitions must come together to resist the idea that euthanasia is progress, that laws allowing it are inevitable, and that its practice is compassionate and humane. That is the culture of death.

OUR CHILDREN

The principle, "Love the sinner, hate the sin," is a neat formula but not an easy one to put into practice. First, because we are tempted to global condemnation and personal judgment. Second, because effectively dissuading people from sin often seems to require a stigma that attaches to persons.

All of this is doubly complicated in the case of homosexuality, which as a psychosexual orientation is not a sin, although the church teaches that homosexual acts, like all sexual activity outside of marriage, are themselves sinful. So the bishops faced a difficult task in writing a statement addressed to the parents of homosexual children and to pastoral ministers (*Origins*, October 9, 1997), more or less based on the premise of loving the homosexual person, while discouraging homosexual acts.

It is primarily a pastoral message that, by its own account, breaks no new theological ground. To parents of homosexual children and adults it offers this practical advice, "Don't break off contact; don't reject your child." To priests and pastoral ministers, the message counsels welcoming "homosexual persons into the faith community. Seek out those on the margins. Avoid stereotyping and condemnation." Contrary to the views of some conservative Christians, the bishops accept that, "generally, homosexual orientation is experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen." They do argue that such an orientation need not lead to sexual activity; for either homosexual or heterosexual, "one's total personhood is not reducible to sexual orientation or behavior."

Some will criticize the bishops' statement as saying too much for the present moment; others will criticize it for saying too little. But should the bishops have put off offering this pastoral word until they reexamined the church's whole teaching on homosexuality?—an undertaking unlikely to be brought to a successful conclusion. Are there difficult and complex questions the message does not address? Certainly. But that is no reason not to hear and take to heart a message that is brave, timely, and an effort at pastoral healing.

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E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

NOT FOR MEN ONLY

Whistle-blowing as a unisex skill

Two views about America's problems with race and gender were upended by two women with the guts to referee in the National Basketball Association.

One view holds that America has become race- and gender-obsessed, quota-ridden, politically correct to a fault. The answer of this camp is to declare the problem of discrimination solved, to toss out affirmative action and to cease talking about race, gender and "past injustices." The other camp sees America as so hopelessly racist and sexist that only the most rigorous forms of affirmative action will keep prejudice at bay. In its extreme forms, it would retreat into race, gender, and ethnic enclaves where "diversity" becomes not a description of how varied we are but a prescription for organizing the United States as a collection of tribes. Of course, these are "ideal types," as the sociologists say, and thus oversimplify. But I bet you recognize them.

A third view might be called "liberal," if that word were not so unfashionable. It's also hopeful. It shares the first camp's belief that the United States has made great progress in beating back prejudice. It holds that no one should be reduced to his or her race, ethnicity, or gender. But with the second camp, it believes this progress cannot be taken for granted, that some pressure is still needed to fight discrimination, that individuals advance by combinations of individual effort and collective assertion.

That's where the NBA's new women refs come in. Nobody doubts that Violet Palmer, thirty-three, and Dee Kantner, thirty-seven, got their jobs on merit. They worked their way up. NBA officials had plenty of opportunity to watch them perform. This summer, Kantner served as the supervisor of officials in the Women's NBA, and Palmer was a ref there in its inaugural season. Kantner officiated in four women's national championship games in the NCAA, while Palmer has worked the last two women's NCAA championships. Seeing talent, the NBA invited both to its referee summer training program.

Like many who break barriers, Kantner and Palmer want to be individuals, not symbols. Yet they also hope other women will take heart from their success. "I don't think Violet or I would ever say our intention is to be trailblazers," said Kantner. "If one of the aftereffects is that women are given opportunities ... obviously we're in favor of that. Our focus now is to referee in the National Basketball Association to the best of our ability."

Will they face challenges and stereotyping? You bet. As Amy Shipley reported in the *Washington Post*, Charles Barkley of the Houston Rockets snapped recently: "I don't think women should be in the Army, and I don't think they should be NBA refs." In a preseason game, Michael Jordan complained Kantner got in his way and his fellow Chicago Bulls seemed to try to trip her. But Jordan got with the program this week. "If they can referee, they can referee no matter what sex they are."

These are tough women. They can take this—and more. "Confrontation is part of being a referee," said Palmer. "If players cross the line, they will receive a technical foul." Getting tossed from a game should convince the rude and recalcitrant that women refs have the same authority as men.

If Palmer and Kantner rose on merit and without lawsuits, their skills were able to shine through because of the aggressive efforts by advocates of women's rights and women's sports. Thanks to Title IX, requiring fairer public spending on women's school sports, and to cultural changes that lead us to take women's sports more seriously, Palmer and Kantner got reffing opportunities that caught the eye of the NBA.

The point of affirmative action is not to create piles of "preferences" for presorted groups, but to acknowledge that prejudice requires specific remedies beyond standard operating procedure. The NBA took an "affirmative" step in breaking with past traditions to give these women a chance.

Ultimately, affirmative action is about helping individuals take full advantage of their skills. That's easier in the military and in sports, where rules can be clear and advancement patterns carefully worked out. But saving the best of affirmative action is worth doing, as Palmer and Kantner have shown us.

And now for baseball: No game needs a fresher set of eyes. As baseball owners debate all their contorted schemes for making the national pastime more popular, they might take the simple step of giving us a few women umps. The women might then launch their own affirmative-action campaign to convince their guy colleagues to agree on one strike zone for all. □

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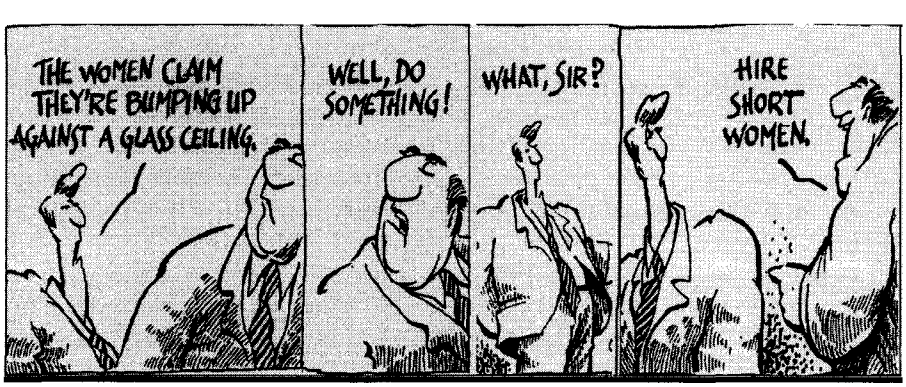

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ABIGAIL McCARTHY

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S COLLEGES

Looking at their future

In 1968, there were over 190 Catholic women's colleges in the United States. Today there are 28. The decline would seem disastrous, were it not for the strength of the remaining few. The annual rating of colleges in *U.S. News & World Report* lists four of them among the very best, seven among those considered the best value, and nine among those commended for diversity.

In September, scholars, college presidents, faculty, and administrators gathered at Trinity College in Washington, D.C., to consider the future role and the impact of Catholic women's colleges in this country. The conference was titled "Catholic Women's Colleges: Models for the New Century."

"Catholic women's colleges are as important today as when they were first founded a century ago," said Trinity College President Patricia A. McGuire. "They will continue to provide educational and leadership opportunities to women of all ages and backgrounds, while at the same time remaining true to their missions as faith-centered institutions."

The opening session, called "Finding the Future in Our History and Tradition," relied on a current Lilly Foundation project at Yale—a study of colleges founded by women religious. Dr. Cynthia Russett, lead historian of the project, and Drs. Tracy Schier and Melanie Morey, scholars participating in the project, have examined the institutional histories of the colleges for insight in planning the future. The strengths of these colleges at their numerical height, it was pointed out, are also among the strengths of those that remain today: They serve an underserved population; they have low student-to-faculty ratios; and they have an impressive female presence in administration and faculty.

The report stressed that the surviving colleges had been innovative in dealing with change. Like many of their secular contemporaries in the Women's College Coalition, they pioneered in continuing education, in part-time programs, and in weekend and distance-learning programs. Some of the most innovative have made creative use of their unique locations. Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana, for example, has used its 1600-acre campus as a base for an earth-literacy degree. It has also compensated for its comparatively isolated location by its external degree programs, including, of all things, a model program for air-traffic controllers.

Among the most successful colleges is Alverno College in Milwaukee, located in a working-class area of the city. *U.S. News & World Report* calls it a college "on education's leading edge" and "one of the three most innovative schools in the U.S." Educators have also named it one of the best regional liberal arts colleges in the Midwest and West. At Alverno students do not receive grades. To graduate they must prove they have achieved competence in eight "abilities": communication, analysis, problem solving, valuing, social interaction, taking responsibility for the global environment, effective citizenship, and aesthetic response. They achieve this through continuous "self-assessment." As an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* put it in 1989, the vanguard of a national movement in higher education is to be found in "a small Roman Catholic women's college."

As long ago as 1918, Dean Mary Molloy of Saint Teresa's College in Winona, Minnesota, spoke at a national meeting of the National Catholic Education Association, pleading for an end to the proliferation of small women's colleges and proposing the establishment of strong regional colleges instead. Because of the unfortunate competition among communities of women religious, her proposal was ignored.

The Lilly reviewers, however, made the point that the closing of so many women's colleges has not been adequately dealt with by either the sponsoring religious communities or the Catholic community. There has been an atmosphere of denial about the disappearances. The future of the colleges that remain ultimately depends on a recognition of what happened in all of its various elements.

Consider the facts. Between 1918 and 1968, 190 four-year and junior Catholic women's colleges were established. (Their very number may have been a weakness. When their number was highest the average student enrollment was only around 600.) These colleges constituted the largest group in higher education consistently led by women. As Harvard sociologist David Riesman said in the 1960s, their sister leaders had been among education's most adventurous, and the colleges themselves were phenomenally successful in lifting their students from one educational plane to another.

What happened?

First, the women's colleges sustained a tremendous blow when their supposedly brother colleges for men adopted co-education, for the most part without consultation or warning. In one city, for instance, where two Catholic men's institutions went co-educational, four women's colleges and junior colleges disappeared, and a fifth was driven almost to extinction.

Second, during the 1960s the colleges' sponsoring communities abruptly changed mission, often choosing to return to the community's roots—serving the poor and helpless—and abandoning higher education. In addition, the great and unexpected exodus from the convent in the 1960s and 1970s drained the colleges of their sister faculties.

Third, the women's colleges experienced a loss of their traditional constituencies. Many of the graduates of the academies that had been their "feeder"

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schools began to choose the newly co-educational Catholic colleges. As early as 1959, 37,000 women were in these co-ed institutions as compared with 50,000 in the women's colleges. Thereafter, the decline was steady. In addition, with the weakening of Catholic cultural ties during and after the 1960s, Catholic students tended to seek admission at prestigious secular institutions.

The surviving women's colleges turned, as they had when founded, to new constituencies, new populations. They established graduate programs and programs for older women. They recruited minority and foreign students, to the distress of some of their alumnae. Trinity College in Washington, D.C., once imperiled, is now a thriving institution of 1,500 students and is listed as among the best. But Patricia McGuire tells with rueful humor of lunching with alumnae who would speak proudly of their daughters at schools like Brown and Yale and then ask her why Trinity had changed so much!

Instead of competing against one another, today the women's colleges are joining in seeking solutions to their common issues: the relationship to their sponsoring religious congregations; the articulation of their Catholic identity and their commitment to women; the problems of funding and development; and the resolution of the conflict posed between the papal letter on education, *Ex corde ecclesiae*, and the norms and history of American higher education.

Whatever their problems, these colleges still share the strength of women's colleges in general—strengths uncovered almost too late by researchers like M. Elizabeth Tidball of George Washington University in the 1970s: Their graduates achieve success at a higher ratio than women graduates of co-educational institutions; are more apt to enter professional schools and pursue doctorates; and are more likely to be self-confident and entertain high aspirations. Their representatives at the September conference did not wonder about survival but about how they might best continue to serve women "of all ages." □

Antonio Ramirez

GIULIANI TIME

Gotham goes G.O.P.

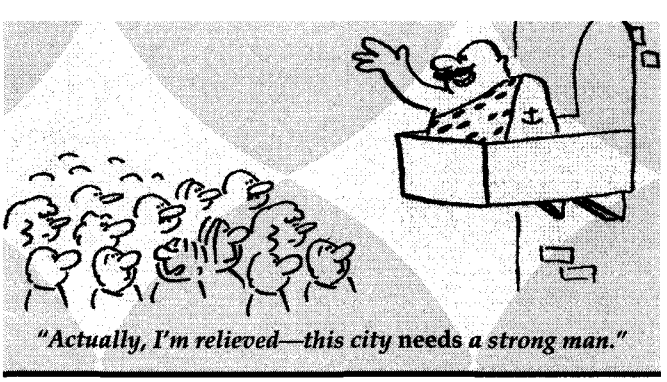
The loud swooshing noise heard in New York City a few minutes after 9 P.M. on November 4 when radio and television stations announced that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani had been re-elected for a second term may well have been the city's political reporters heaving a sigh of relief. They would no longer have to find inventive ways to report on a noncampaign leading to an inevitable conclusion: Giuliani's landslide victory against Democrat Ruth Messinger, Manhattan borough president.

Indeed, Giuliani's victory seemed such a done deal that pundits kept predicting an ever-wider margin of victory; some pre-election estimates had the Republican incumbent clobbering Messinger by 20 to 30 points.When Giuliani squeaked through with a mere 16 percent edge (57 to 41), the mayor's spinmeisters rushed to remind us that, after all, New York's Democrats outnumber Republicans five-to-one.

Giuliani's big win came as no surprise under the circumstances: he was visibly and energetically on the job during a period of improving economic conditions, falling crime rates, and growing disenchantment with classic liberal solutions to urban problems. Economic improvements owed little to the mayor, and the fall in crime (making New York, amazingly, one of the safest big cities in the country) began during the last two years of David Dinkins's administration. But incumbents profit from upturns on their watch, no matter who deserves the credit. To be fair, Giuliani and his police chiefs introduced crime-fighting measures, chiefly an aggressive crackdown on "quality of life" crimes—panhandling, public drinking, and the like—that apparently discouraged more serious crime. But Giuliani's critics aren't wrong, New York's unemployment rate, twice the national average, still lags way behind those of other major cities.

Beside his incumbent's advantages, Giuliani was also favored by a mighty campaign war chest fed by companies the city does business with, and by the Democrats' disarray. Potential opponents who might have given the mayor a stronger run for his money looked at the polls and headed for cover: Comptroller Alan Hevesi, one of those who passed, is the Democratic front-runner for 2001 when, thanks to term-limit foolishness, both he and Giuliani will be looking for jobs.

Messinger, a long-time causenik who served in the City Council representing Manhattan's frequently off-the-wall liberal-to-radical Upper West Side before graduating to the relatively powerless borough president's job, started the race burdened by her ultra-liberal record and internal Democratic party battles. Much was made, from time to time, about Messinger's move to the political center but, in truth, if she were going to move at all there is no way, short of mounting the barricades, that she could possibly have moved any



"Actually, I'm relieved—this city needs a strong man."

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further left. In the Democratic primary, Messinger barely squeaked out a 40 percent plurality to avoid a run-off with the Reverend Al Sharpton. In a comedy-of-errors, the antiquated Board of Elections took over a week to certify Messinger's victory over Sharpton, who took the opportunity, six weeks before the general election, to hog the spotlight with his stock-in-trade charges of racism.

Facing a wounded candidate and divided Democrats (many Democratic office holders and labor leaders sat out the campaign or endorsed the mayor) Giuliani had only to control his penchant for rhetorical overkill and coast to victory. He goofed famously once when, following the city's Columbus Day parade, he scolded Messinger, who is Jewish, for not attending the day's Mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. When it became apparent that sooner or later even the pope was likely to come down on him for his rudeness, Giuliani issued a politician's "If-I-offended-anyone" apology and the storm passed.

It would be a mistake to read too much significance into Giuliani's victory. Although he champions fiscal restraint, the death penalty, privatization of public services, and a harsh hand toward those on welfare, the mayor is right up there with liberals supporting abortion-on-demand, gun-control, immigrant rights, and gay rights. His education policies, like everyone else's, are a mish-mash; his panacea being mayoral control. Messinger's defeat seems to ring a death knell for trendy liberalism, but plenty of liberals (mostly Democrats) were elected to office along with Giuliani. For him to claim he is a mainstream conservative, in the Gingrich mode, he has a lot of ground to cover. Essentially, his was a Rudy one-note campaign: tough on crime.

Giuliani is notoriously thin-skinned and abrasive. New Yorkers, proud of their city's tougher-than-thou reputation, cheer him on sometimes, but at other times he brings out the worst in people. When several city police officers tortured Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, in a Brooklyn police station, one of the cops reportedly told the victim: "This is Giuliani time now." Giuliani, who consistently defends policemen whenever they are charged with brutality (the subject of a recent scathing report by Amnesty International), opposes independent civilian complaint review, saying only cops should investigate charges against cops.

Now, with a significant Giuliani mandate (he was elected in 1993 with a bare 2 percent margin), some pundits are touting the mayor as a prospect for national office. In 2000, a year before his lame-duck term expires, Giuliani might run for the U.S. Senate seat held by Senator Moynihan or (are we ready for this?) he might go for a spot on the Republican national ticket. In an election-week article in *New York* magazine, reporter Mark Jacobson, speculating on this, concluded that even New Yorkers who beat the drums for the mayor might draw the line at Rudy in the White House. Can we, he asked, trust this man with the bomb?

Antonio Ramirez, *a retired labor union editor, is a life-long New Yorker.*

John Buell

THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

Our precarious prosperity

Wall Street's wild rides fascinate the media. But just what these mean for most of us is a question too seldom asked. July's plunge in the value of the Thai baht was compounded when investors, expecting the devaluation of the Hong Kong dollar, staged a massive sell off of Asian stocks. U. S. investors, anticipating declining exports to Asia, followed suit, causing a 554-point fall in the Dow (October 27). Stocks rebounded, but Wall Street's volatility remains a serious concern.

Amidst this turmoil, we should keep some simple facts in mind. After years of relatively fixed exchange rates, most currencies are now bought and sold just like any other commodity in world markets. And throughout most of Latin America, Europe, and much of Asia, barriers to trade in goods and services have also been lowered. A corporation's freedom to invest wherever it wants is written into the structure of trade treaties. Banks and other lending institutions now also enjoy an unprecedented degree of freedom from oversight and regulation.

These corporate freedoms were supposed to produce prosperity for the whole world. What they have done is to trigger a relentless urge by corporate leadership to relocate business to nations with the lowest wages and most deregulated financial markets. Many mainstream economists assure us that only poorly paid, low-skilled jobs are affected. But the new information technologies now encourage export of high-tech processes and even whole management systems. Economist Harley Shaiken points out that state-of-the-art auto plants have been relocated to Mexico. Workers there are now paid about 12 percent of the U. S. wage.

Not everyone has been a loser in this process. Downward pressure on wages has translated into growing short-term profits for multinational corporations. As stockholders and managers make more money, they in turn pour more funds into the stock market. As prices rise, investors bet more on further growth, fueling a self-sustaining stock-market boom. Unprecedented numbers of working- and middle-class investors, seeing great gains to be made, have jumped into the market as well. Nonetheless, despite all the talk about market booms and widespread economic prosperity, most stocks are still held by the wealthy, with 1 percent of U. S. families owning about 40 percent of corporate stocks. Wealthy investors, the aspiring middle class, and the pension funds now so heavily committed to the market need to consider whether a global economy built on such concentrations of wealth will long sustain economic growth.

Most Americans are better off than a few years ago, but such gains must be placed in historical perspective. World

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economic growth has slowed from 5 percent per annum in the two decades after World War II to about half that figure in the '90s. The current U. S. expansion is the weakest of the postwar era, with Gross Domestic Product growing at the slowest rate and employment at the second slowest. Real wages remain more than 5 percent below their 1989 level, near the peak of the last business cycle.

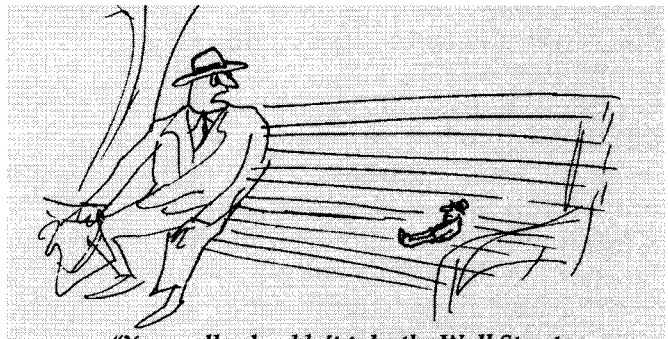
In newly deregulated foreign markets, such as Asia, there has been rampant economic expansion. But these states must now sell their goods in a world market in which wages are stagnant everywhere. Working-class consumers are already heavily in debt, and cannot go much further down this path. Bankers or government leaders everywhere have been reluctant to ask how, with wages so sluggish, consumers will be able to afford to buy the goods now being produced. High profits always spur some level of investment, but if worker wages don't increase as capacity, profits, and productivity grow, production must inevitably exceed consumer buying power. Consumption by the wealthy, who often spend a lower percentage of their income, won't fill the void. Without broad-based demand, product inventory and excess capacity accumulate. Incentives for further investment or even current production levels will then erode. Jobs and eventually even corporate profits are then threatened.

What is at stake in all this turmoil for U. S. citizens? Predictably, major downturns in markets result in international lending authorities, governments, and businesses pushing more of the medicine that brought about the crisis in the first place. Asian states are now being urged to reduce supports for the most vulnerable, limit labor's rights, and reduce investments in education, the environment, and other public needs. The *New York Times* recently (Saturday, October 25) assured its readers that if the Asian states follow the corporate cure, "they can recover and continue to grow in two or three years or less."

But it is hard to imagine how scaling back public expenditures in a time of economic crisis and embracing further competitive pressures on workers' wages will help restore consumer purchasing power.

None of this proves that a 1929 Depression is around the corner, either for U. S. stocks or the global economy. The Federal Reserve and international monetary authorities have already put together bailout packages to stabilize Asian currencies. On the domestic front, IBM's decision to buy back billions of dollars of its own stock also seems to have buoyed "investor confidence." Stock markets, like currency markets, move largely in response to the guesses individual investors make regarding the actions of other investors. A herd mentality easily takes hold, and herds are inherently unpredictable.

Bailouts, however, whether corporate or government sponsored, merely paper over the growing instability and casino-like operations of the global economy. A world where businesses can relocate their production facilities at will obviously undermines the ability of labor unions to press for just compensation. The deregulation and lack of oversight



"You really shouldn't take the Wall Street situation so hard, Finchley."

in financial and currency markets lead to speculative excesses—the source of the Asian collapse—and that makes productive investment more costly. When corporations like IBM buy back stock or lay off workers and cut costs just to keep brokers and speculators happy, most of us lose in the long run. Money spent to boost the value of a stock is money no longer available for wages or productive investment.

There are alternatives to a world where even the very foundations of commerce— land, human labor, and money— are continually for sale at any price. Admittedly, these alternative ways of regulating economic life would be difficult to achieve in the current political climate. Still, the increased volatility in stock and currency markets has even begun to worry some well-positioned investors. Labor, liberal, tax-justice, and environmental organizations have for some time now raised regulatory issues, and the stock market's current difficulties may give these advocates more confidence and more visibility. Keeping alive alternative possibilities is important, especially if the current crisis were to deepen.

For starters, taxes on currency transactions and restoration of adequate capital gains taxation would ease speculative excesses. Central banks could encourage investment in new technologies and discourage loans for real estate and unproductive mergers. U. S. and Asian states could collectively negotiate broader access to Japanese and other protectionist markets as a condition for continued access to their own. Trade treaties with developing nations should provide labor with as many rights as corporations now enjoy under those accords. All governments should observe minimal wage and labor standards as a condition for membership in new trade zones. Labor not only here but throughout the world is pressing for such basic rights, and wage standards could be pegged to each nation's general level of productivity so as not to become protectionist instruments. Such measures are vital for more than just the average worker. The whole history of capitalism demonstrates that without growing wages and steady consumer demand, even corporate growth is ephemeral.

John Buell *is the author of* Politics by Other Means *(Illinois University Press).*

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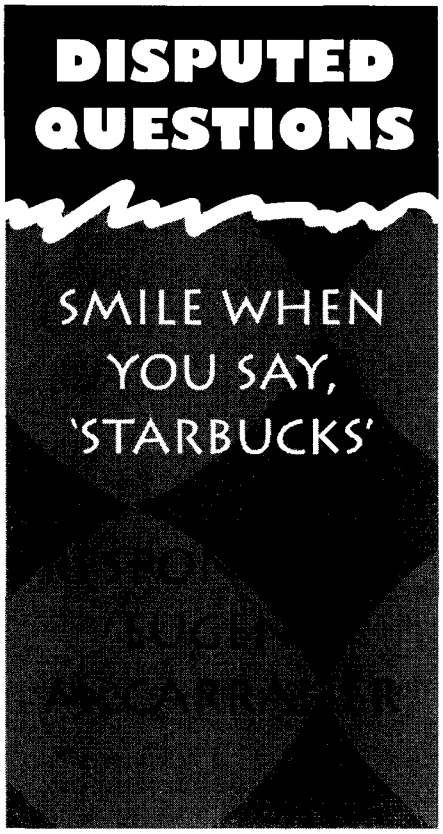
Introduction

DISPUTED QUESTIONS



We confess: The editors had a stiff argument about publishing Eugene McCarraher's polemic on Starbucks Catholicism ("Smile, When You Say 'Laity': The Hidden Triumph of the Consumer Ethos," September 12, 1997). No pushing or shoving—of course! Some real incomprehension, some genuine disbelief, some utter perplexity, and, naturally, some genuine disagreement along with an insistent suspicion that maybe—just maybe—there was something here.

All of this led to the telling question: If we were arguing so heatedly about this, wouldn't the rest of the *Commonweal* crew out there find it provocative? Indeed, many have. We asked some readers for their comments, from others came the spontaneous remark or letter of question or clarification. They follow on the next eight pages. Some respondents are annoyed, irritated, perplexed; some comprehending and sympathetic. Rest assured, nobody totally agrees with McCarraher's analysis. The perfect *Commonweal* article!

Further reflection here in the editorial office leads us to think that "Smile, When You Say 'Laity,'" has this to recommend it:

Its economic and cultural analysis of a triumphant laity stands outside the shopworn questions: When can the laity (that is, women and married men) get ordained? Can they ever be Cardinals? When will they be allowed to preach?

It is not pious.

It comes from a younger Catholic (McCarraher appears to be under forty) apparently free (or innocent) of the quarrels over pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism, and looking to the kind of Catholicism we will need in the next millennium.

McCarraher's thesis is distinctly against the American compromise, which *Commonweal* has preached, with some notable exceptions, these many years (and which we continue to favor in the absence of anything better). We really do think the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is a better church because of its encounter with the American experience. But okay, McCarraher's complaints about the seductions of bourgeois Christianity deserve a careful and serious hearing.

As well, there are the drawbacks (this is the perfect *Commonweal* article, after all).

It goes over the top rhetorically, especially at moments when it needs to clinch its argument.

Its academic venue and its deconstructionist mode of proceeding remind us that increasing numbers of younger Catholics take their frame of interpretation from outside rather than inside the Catholic community. In other words, they learn about Catholicism in graduate school—a prospect more gruesome than learning about it from Sister Mary Ignatius.

And then there's the problem of whether it's true or not.

But we leave that to you.

The September 12 issue with "Smile, When You Say 'Laity,'" is now posted on our web site (www.commonwealmagazine.org) for those who tidied up too soon and passed their copy on to the neighbors.

THE EDITORS

Mary C. Segers

Metaphors are fine, but after reading Eugene McCarraher's essay three times, I'm still trying to decipher "Starbucks Catholicism" in his September 12 article "Smile, When You Say 'Laity.'" I finally began to understand his point when I received in the mail this week a church flyer announcing that Merrill Lynch was coming to our parish to discuss estate planning. Instead of a lecture on theology or spirituality, we are to hear about "gifting strategies" and "minimizing probate."

There are positives and negatives in McCarraher's analysis. The argument seems to be that, as Catholics have become successful in American society, they have absorbed the values and ways of thinking of late twentieth-century corporate America. Similarly, as the laity have become more prominent within the church, they are applying these norms to parish life. The working-class Catholicism of a bricks-and-mortar church, with its emphasis on social and political change, has been replaced by a new American Catholic religious culture which values expertise, consumption, and a "therapeutic spirituality."

What evidence does McCarraher offer to support this assertion? Where has "the Church Mellow" triumphed? In North Dakota? Iowa? New Mexico? New Jersey? Does the "professional-managerial bloc" supposedly ascendant in American Catholicism include African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic Catholics? McCarraher provides anecdotal, impressionistic accounts of three parishes among the more than 19,000 that exist in the American church. The data supporting his argument are admittedly thin.

No matter. McCarraher is onto something. A lay-directed church poses challenges. The priest shortage may be good since it forces ordinary Catholics to take some responsibility for passing on a living religious tradition. However, most lay people—and even most seminary students—have not been trained or educated for this

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task. Thus I agree with McCarraher that contemporary Catholics need a sense of history and tradition. The church does not need to borrow corporate jargon to carry out its mission. Lay Catholics would benefit from a deeper knowledge of spirituality, of the history of the sacraments, of church history, of theology, and of the development of doctrine.

Catholicism is a religion of the head as well as heart. The education previously reserved to priests and religious should be made available to a new generation of lay Catholics—otherwise we may very well end up with a "Church Mellow."

Mary C. Segers *is professor of political science at Rutgers University.*

James Heft

This past May, I participated in a two-day colloquium on lay ministry in the church here at the University of Dayton. Nearly sixty people attended, including twenty bishops, as many theologians, and lay leaders. The group was diverse ethnically and racially; it included liberals and conservatives, men and women whose names the readers of *Commonweal* would recognize. Eight commissioned papers and the discussion they shaped were devoted to clarifying a theology of the laity, specifically "ecclesial lay ministry," a theology for professionally prepared lay people who work in the church. Discussions were candid, vigorous, at times a little tense, but ultimately very positive.

I had trouble relating this experience and my understanding of the laity to Eugene McCarraher's portrait of a "lay revolution" fed mainly by a therapeutic spirituality that has created "a Starbucks Catholicism embodied in a Church Mellow." As I read, I found myself returning to the substance of the research and the tone of the discussion of our May colloquium. McCarraher may be onto something—a segment of Catholicism that is sophisticated, efficient, but soft and affluent. Nonetheless, I believe he overstates both its influence and its negative characteristics. Lay leadership today assumes multiple styles, many more than his narrowly focused portrait suggests. We are witnessing not a velvet revolution, but a valued evolution, one, for the most part, encouraged and supported by the hierarchy. McCarraher suggests as much in his "breezy" history of the growth of lay leadership.

Moreover, the actual profile of this strong and rapidly growing movement of lay ministers (20,000 already employed with over 20,000 now at various stages of preparation) is much more diverse than McCarraher suggests. Some members of the laity, well-paid and highly skilled members of the corporate world, have brought their managerial skills and habits of thought to parish councils and organizations. A similar pattern has emerged at Catholic universities where board members or trustees are typically CEOs of major corporations. Sometimes some of their corporate practices have been misapplied to the university, but at other times, some corporate practices, for example, TQM (total quality management), strategic planning, and budget conventions, have been immensely helpful when they have been applied to some segments of university operations. Similar mixed experiences have been reported by a number of parishes: both helpful and mistaken applications of practices derived mainly from the corporate world.

None of the bishops at the Dayton colloquium seemed threatened by either the rapid growth or the current influence of lay ministers and parish councils. And, yes, many of us, not just bishops and religious, continue to be concerned about the diminishing numbers of priests and religious. The rapid growth in lay ministry should not be thought of as a temporary filler until the number of priests and religious can be built back up again. Rather, we see this valued evolution as a providential development, a talented and generous group of dedicated people meant to share in the leadership of the Catholic church in the coming century.

I believe that McCarraher's picture of a "velvet revolution" creating a "Church Mellow" is overdrawn. He mistakes a part for the whole, a much more complex whole. Moreover, he focuses on that part negatively, caricaturing it as the embodiment of an "upscale, therapeutic agora in values and ethics." I suggest he visit more parishes than he seems to have done, discover in the process many more diverse groups of lay Catholics, and be less shocked by the ways in which our culture has influenced and, as history shows, will continue to influence all of us, even as we stumble and struggle, opposing its excesses and learning from its achievements—all in order to be faithful to the gospel.

Marianist priest, James Heft, *is chancellor and professor of faith and culture at the University of Dayton. He serves as vice-chair of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.*

Una M. Cadigan

During John Paul II's recent visit to France, NPR interviewed a young Louisiana woman who was clearly fervid in her acceptance of the pope's challenge to young people. "We want to be the generation," she said, "that embraces the Cross." Whether or not this young woman has ever bought a latté at Starbucks, any church enleavened by such passion as hers will be anything but "mellow."

I agree with much of Eugene McCarraher's analysis—the shift in the laity's role in the church is one of the most important facets of late-twentieth-century U.S. Catholicism, and we don't yet understand all its implications. The consumerism and individualism of contemporary culture are, indeed, deeply dissonant with the gospel vision of the kingdom of God. I am left with a number of questions, though, most of which have to do with the goals of McCarraher's analysis, the end to which his characterization of contemporary Catholicism is the means.

McCarraher says that "unless we recognize and come to grips with this revolution, we are in danger of misun-

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derstanding and misconceiving the challenges facing the U.S. Catholic church in the twenty-first century." He does not detail these challenges nor the strategies by which we might "come to grips with" them. This would be a tall order for so short an essay, so McCarraher, reasonably, confines himself primarily to diagnosis. What he sees is a "professional-managerial" laity with a "wrestler's hold on the clerical imagination" attempting to force the church into the mold of their own unreflectively corporate-therapeutic values.

I take it when a historian speaks as a believer to the community in which he lives that he wants them to listen. I further take it that when he describes that community he wants its members to recognize themselves in his description. If McCarraher shares these assumptions about a historian's role in speaking to his or her own community, then he may want to modify his cartoon version of contemporary cultural life into something in which people can see themselves reflected both accurately and charitably.

McCarraher seems distressed both by the ethos of the corporate culture in which the triumphant laity live and by their attempts to find authenticity and transcendence therein. It may perhaps be more difficult for middle-class believers today (and, *a fortiori*, for academics) to see the face of Jesus in a middle manager or an infomercial host than in a homeless person or a person with AIDS. But one of the things that the church has been consistently good at understanding is that people search for the holy where they are, and the church had better meet them there or it won't be able to speak to them at all.

A tradition that can turn statues of fertility goddesses into statues of a virgin mother can surely baptize TQM without half trying. However bent this world is, the Spirit still broods over it. If groups of thoughtful, educated Catholics really started thinking and talking about what it meant to get our hands around (that is, manage) the kind of world in which we want to live, in its entirety, what emerged might startle us all. And if the group included that young woman from Louisiana, the laity's victory, instead of being pyrrhic, might just be redemptive.

Una M. Cadigan *teaches in the history department at the University of Dayton.*

Patrick Allitt

Eugene McCarraher is quite right: the laity are more powerful and influential today than at any other time in American Catholic history, just as they are better educated and richer. And he is right to argue that the process was already under way before Vatican II. The evidence is everywhere. For example, Saint Thomas More parochial school in Decatur, Georgia, where my daughter Frances is a fourth-grader, founded in 1950, was run entirely by sisters at first, but is now run almost entirely by laity. The principal is a layman and only one sister now remains as a full-time teacher. Similarly, the adult education group at Atlanta's Christ the King Cathedral and similar parish groups in the Atlanta area are all run by lay men and women.

What strikes me, however, is how well they do it. It is enough to give the managerial middle classes a good name! The school has no serious problems and is vastly superior to the local public school in which Frances attended first grade. Catholics and non-Catholics alike are lining up to get in because the school provides a fine blend of academic, moral, and religious education. I'm sure the old tales about Catholic schools and their nuns tempering ignorance with tyranny were often exaggerated, but they were not entirely groundless. The adult ed. groups too are welcoming, prompt, well-attended, and full of energetic, well-read members who show every sign of initiative. Priests sometimes come to the meetings but show no inclination to thrust themselves forward or lord it over the laity—just what McCarraher would expect.

I can't quite understand why McCarraher denigrates the contemporary Catholic situation by calling it "Starbucks" Catholicism and the "Church Mellow," since I know he does not want to revive the flinty austerities of the preconciliar church. It may be true, as he says, that incessant repetition of words like "diversity," "inclusiveness," and "democratic" soon gets annoying and that Catholicism, if it is no more than therapy, is a bore. But if you substitute "charitable" for "mellow," everything looks better, and I think the Catholic church is much more charitable now than in former decades. It is selective in its use of Catholic resources, too, but it always has been; it's just that today's choices and emphases are different from those of 1897. I agree that Catholics should preserve their sense of history and tradition, but that's more likely now than it used to be. Hagiography often got in the way of real history until talented, sharp-eyed laity like Gene McCarraher himself took over the writing of Catholic history from priests and nuns. As a result we know far more about Catholic history today than ever before.

Patrick Allitt *is associate professor of history at Emory University and author of* Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome *(Cornell University Press).*

Michael Baxter

Readers tempted to think that Eugene McCarraher overstates our current dilemma should take a look at an article in *America* (September 13, 1997). Thomas P. Sweetser, a Jesuit priest who directs the Parish Evaluation Project, recommends a "filling station" model for an effective parish. "Everything," he says, " would be geared to knowing the needs and desires of [parishioners] and responding to those needs. The liturgy would have to be adjusted and adapted to a variety of situations and circumstances. The people attending would come from a wider environment than the area within the classical parish boundaries. *People would be attracted and drawn to the Eucharist because it 'fit' them"* (italics mine).

There is a grain of truth in what Sweetser says, but in the end he pre-

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sents us with an image of the church as provider-of-consumer-goods-and-services headed up by Jesus, the greatest marketing consultant of them all. What we have here is a hot-off-the-presses example of McCarraher's "velvet revolution."

McCarraher is right to deplore the ideology of choice ushered in by this revolution. And he is right to see Vatican II as a culmination rather than a commencement of the takeover of the church by a managerial elite. But it seems to me that this "velvet revolution" has not been a triumph of an accommodated laity alone. It has also been a triumph of an accommodated clergy. While McCarraher acknowledges the role of clerics in his account and rightly rounds up some of the usual suspects (Ireland, Ryan, and Kerby), he seems to blame the church's embrace of U.S. corporate culture entirely on the laity. I think the clergy had more than a hand in it.

Dorothy Day thought the same, back in the twenties, when she encountered what she later called "the scandal of businesslike priests." Likewise in the forties, when she noted the University of Notre Dame's role in creating the bomb; and again, when she tangled with Cardinal Francis Spellman over the grave-diggers' strike. My point is this: Sweetser's church-as-filling-station approach is a recent instance of a long history of clerical accommodation to the mores of the managerial class.

Focusing on the responsibility of both laity and clergy for this "velvet revolution" is important for two reasons. First, it should remind us that our present predicament derives not from an emergent laity, but from an emergent Americanized laity "empowered" by an Americanized clergy. Second, if we do not see this revolution as the result of a mutual failure, we might indulge in yet another round of lay-clergy feuding, and thus avoid addressing a real pastoral crisis: Many young Catholics in the position of having to "choose" their Catholicism are, ironically, choosing a version that favors obligation, service, and love over "choice." These young people do not seek a Eucharist that "fits their needs," but pray that their needs will be transformed by the Eucharist. If we fail to show them how such a transformation can occur, we will fail them utterly.

Michael Baxter, C.S.C., *teaches in the theology department at the University of Notre Dame.*

Jack Deedy

A "Starbucks Catholicism embodied in a Church Mellow?" Give me a break. Paul Wilkes's "good enough Catholic" no more defines a new "disciple" in the American church than Frances Kissling's Catholics for a Free Choice reflects common Catholic attitudes toward abortion. And if Michael Novak's "theology of the corporation" belongs to a Starbucks "bazaar"—well, maybe that isn't so bad given reports that his theology directly influenced John Paul's social encyclicals, which just may prove this pope's most enduring legacy.

More to the point, how accurate is it, really, to speak of "the laity's victory" in running the American church? The prominence of the laity in today's church is not to be denied, but is this a "victory," or have laity moved into a void created by the failure of the church's own "professional and managerial" class, its ordained clergy, to measure up to the standards of "clerical excellence" noted long ago by Dan Callahan? Might it be more accurate to talk of clerical default? The unfortunate reality is that American priests as a group have not risen above the mediocrity mistaken as intelligence and leadership before an educated laity discovered the shallowness of those supposedly possessed clerical qualities. That priest whom Andrew Greeley saw as a "quarterback" one day directing an array of "spiritualities" in a glorious new church never made it off the practice squad, not in substantial numbers, anyway.

What went wrong? Lots of things, and for that the laity bears its share of blame. But before the "self-help, inspirational crowd" is anathematized—and some of them should be—might we ask about our ordained co-religionists, historically the leaders, inspirers, and motivators of the rest of us? Where did they go? What turned the American church's own "professional and managerial" class into a body of many chiefs, few Indians? (Recently I saw an ordination class of two flanked by four, or was it five, bishops.) Do we blame assertive laity and the national secular culture for clerical flight and the drying up of vocations? Might the church's own professional class have something to answer for intellectually—and morally? Too many have become behavioral embarrassments.

The other night a familiar face popped onto the television screen. It belonged to a priest many states removed from Massachusetts where I now live, and whom I had interviewed a few years ago. He'd been picked up by police for soliciting a prostitute. His job? Diocesan director of vocations.

And McCarraher fingers the laity and frets for the future.

John Deedy *was* Commonweal's *managing editor from 1967 to 1978*

David L. Schindler

By happy coincidence, I was occupied with the work of Charles Péguy at the time I received Eugene McCarraher's "Smile, When You Say 'Laity.'" As is well known, Péguy struggled vigorously with clericalism in the church, and with the political Catholicism that extended "clericalist" modes of thought into the world (for example, the integralism of *L' Action Française*).

At issue, in Péguy's famous phrasing, was the collapse of *mystique* into *politique*. Péguy recognized that Roman Catholicism in France in 1910 was probably stronger than it had ever been under the Third Republic—and in this sense Hilaire Belloc was right in his denial that France had been "de-Christianized." Péguy's point was rather that the strength of the church had come at the expense of "de-mystification." Born of faith (*mystique*), the Catholic movement in politics had given way to re-

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liance on power (*politique*).

In technical terms, *mystique* integrates the eternal and the temporal, while *politique* separates them. Péguy sorts this out in terms of "clericalism." What we have, he argued, is mostly ecclesiastical cures on the one hand and "lay cures" on the other. The ecclesiastical cures "remove the temporal from the eternal," while the lay cures "extract the eternal from the temporal." The result is a curious convergence of mindsets. From opposite directions, both groups end up reducing the gospel to an exercise in political power.

McCarraher's perceptive analysis, I believe, confirms and illustrates the argument of Péguy. The lens of Péguy, however, brings into focus the intrinsic link between the older "clericalist" and the more recent "lay" culture. Having failed to go to the theological roots of the problem of clericalism and its twin, integralism, the laity inevitably repeat their basic flaw: namely, technical management in advance of gospel transformation as the way of the church *ad intra* and *ad extra* (no matter if the laity's managerial style is now rather more "nondirective" and "nonhierarchical").

McCarraher is quite right that the new "techno-urban" lifestyle is not the exclusive domain of progressive Catholicism. Catholics on all sides of the spectrum are content with the old dualism which would marginalize Dorothy Day's way of sanctity as "exceptional," relative to the "realistic" world of professional expertise.

Georges Bernanos once said we should presume that intellectuals are imbeciles until they prove the contrary. What he meant was that we should not confuse the mastery of techniques with the wisdom which emerges from the prayer and suffering of the little ones of the gospel. This, in my opinion, is the theological lesson to be drawn from McCarraher's wonderfully stimulating reflection.

David L. Schindler *is professor of fundamental theology at the John Paul II Institute in Washington, D.C., and editor of the North American edition of* Communio.

David O'Brien

Historian Eugene McCarraher's provocative essay echoes themes heard often from the few sharp young Catholics who really care about the Catholic tradition and its promise. Uninterested in my generation's arguments with the church, they share McCarraher's anger at the mindless, therapeutic complacency of so much of American Catholicism as they find it. If that accommodationist Catholicism is the result of a lay revolution, as McCarraher argues, it was unintentional, a revolution by default. It resulted in large part from an almost total absence of leadership; good bishops isolated, weak ones promoted, depressed priests no longer recruiting successors, shrinking religious orders, justifiably frustrated women, and the near-complete disappearance of Catholic intellectuals much interested in the real church. After the failure of church reform in the early seventies, all but the restorationists abandoned ecclesiastical politics. Can you name a national movement or organization to the left of Opus Dei with a significant influence either on the institutional church or on Catholic self-understanding? Of course, careerists, who attend to the organization, won. And McCarraher, who simply ignores the organization, names the all-too-predictable result.

Of course in a free society, where people eventually realize they can in fact choose, things will get difficult for those who want "good"choices: theological coherence, corporate discipline, engagement with tradition, mobilization for mission. If you want those things, you have to work at them, with the organization and with the people who compose it. But the more conservative usually lack pastoral skills, or interest, and the reformers, sometimes pastorally alert, lack a Catholic strategy, and even the will to organize. So of course the dynamic of accommodation by class and culture continues.

But McCarraher's history is only half right. Each of his three stages of lay emergence contained important truths. Turn-of-the-century Americanism had Isaac Hecker's understanding that eventually freedom means faith will depend on personal conviction: choice. Catholic Action witnessed to the fact that if you want to confront massive public evil, you need a strategy, one which combines forming people in an alternative Catholic subculture while deepening a sense of responsibility for the culture shared with others.

The emerging laity of the Vatican II era had too much cold-war Americanism, true enough, but they sensed a great truth: the movement of millions of poverty-stricken immigrants from margin to mainstream in a few generations was an experience of self-liberation, not of passive cultural accommodation. Reactionaries then and young Catholics hankering for substance today seem to think that families improved automatically, without sacrifice, and if they did sacrifice, it was to a false God. Immigrants watching grandchildren graduate from Notre Dame knew better.

Garry Wills wrote of loss, *Bare Ruined Choirs*, a quarter century ago, and his words still move Gene McCarraher. But Wills missed the point in that wonderful book, as McCarraher does now. The question is what should we do, not what we lost. The point is responsibility: there's no one to blame. Judgments about loss or gain, accommodation or liberation, turn on what we have done with the economic security, educational opportunity, social status, and access to power that our parents gained for us and that make us responsible for our lives, our church, our history.

In the absence of the profound challenge which our American Catholic story poses for middle-class Catholics, of course it's all fluff. In the absence of the political analysis that judgment requires, criticism of fluff risks adding...more fluff.

David O'Brien *is Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the College of the Holy Cross and author of* Isaac Hecker: An American Catholic, *among other books.*

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Paul Wilkes

First off, a humble thanks to Eugene McCarraher for including me in the same sentence with Marianne Williams, Deepak Chopra, M. Scott Peck, and Thomas Moore.

But alas, it is not deserved, and the Sisters of Notre Dame, Marianists, and Jesuits who did their best to form me throughout seventeen years of Catholic education would feel they had failed totally if I blithely accepted such praise. Even with the hope of impressing my publisher, or my kids. The reality is that for every book of mine that is sold, these authors sell thousands, perhaps tens of thousands. They get free-standing displays in bookstores; at best I have a copy or two lurking nearby, sometimes even properly shelved. And while they tactfully skirt the issue of such an uncomfortable topic as institutional affiliation, I make no secret of my Catholicism.

As for the "low-intensity disciple" that McCarraher claims I am appealing to in my book, *The Good Enough Catholic*, perhaps on this account he is onto something. If such a person is marked by having a great affinity for the Eucharist, being a member of a parish, developing a prayer life, looking at work as co-creation with God, reading the next letter from the local bishop, being inspired and motivated by the church's social encyclicals, instituting family prayer and religious rituals, and reaching outside yourself to make a positive impact on all those you meet, all of which I advocate in *The Good Enough Catholic*, then McCarraher has indeed found me out.

Paul Wilkes *is a filmmaker and author, most recently of* The Good Enough Catholic *(Ballantine).*

James Hitchcock

McCarraher's understanding of American Catholicism, which is largely correct as far as it goes, raises a fundamental question: Is it possible that the kind of culture he describes is inherently secular, and that attempts to create a "Catholic" version of it cannot but diminish any kind of faith? The recent history of liberal Protestantism seems to bear this out.

But no one has attempted a systematic sociology of conservative American Catholicism, inquiring into who exactly makes up the various movements which go by that name. Liberals think it is mainly elderly people who will soon be gone. But conservative activists talk about their liberal opponents, such as Call to Action, as "a sea of grey heads," and there are in fact a number of vigorous, intelligent, articulate younger people quite visible in the conservative movement.

In this respect, conservative Catholicism is similar to militant evangelical Protestantism, which whatever else it may be, is a "revivalist" movement, not merely the survival of the old. There is also a parallel in that conservative Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, actually includes many of the kinds of people McCarraher describes, who ought by his logic to be liberals. It is a truism about evangelicalism that it includes a good number of people highly trained in science and technology, and that nuclear engineers, for example, are more likely to be church members than are professional poets.

The contrast between the dioceses of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Saginaw, Michigan (*see Commonweal*, June 6, 1997), illustrates a neglected reality. They seem to be almost interchangeable as rural Midwestern societies, but they are at polar opposites from each other in religion, not because of anything about the laity in each place but solely because of the episcopal leaders they have had for thirty years. In the age of the laity, a bishop can still place his stamp very firmly on his See, if he chooses to do so. (In this respect, contrast the conservative diocese of Arlington, part of metropolitan Washington, D.C., with the liberal diocese of Richmond, largely rural and Southern.)

McCarraher is uninformed about conservative Catholics in two relatively minor ways. Such people are only too aware of the ways in which they themselves have helped promote the "lay revolution," which they see as richly ironic. Most conservative Catholic movements have little clerical support, but where would Call to Action be without its nuns? There is also continuing suspicion between many religious conservatives and political-economic conservatives. William F. Buckley, Jr., has never been a favorite of *The Wanderer*.

James Hitchcock *is professor of history at Saint Louis University.*

Dolores R. Leckey

After reading (and rereading) Eugene McCarraher's article, words attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt flashed repeatedly across my mind. "Is this worth the effort of a rational response?" I'm not sure.

And I'm not sure exactly what, precisely, is McCarraher's point. Perhaps his final paragraph holds a clue. There, at last, he names several perceived specific problems: choice and diversity, the erosion among Catholics of a sense of history and tradition, and the inadmissibility of doubt in the continued growth in faith. These are new?

Haven't choice and diversity, in the context of unity and communion, been an ongoing church debate from the very beginning? Aren't the Pauline texts a window onto those very issues in first-century Christianity?

The inadmissibility of doubt? Has McCarraher missed much of the contemporary theological conversation, to say nothing of the fact that Thérèse of Lisieux has been named a Doctor of the church? She whose final days on earth were characterized by the two-edged sword of doubt and trust?

In McCarraher's concentration on capitalism's co-opting of American Catholic laity, he has apparently missed the legions of laity who have been (and are) Christ's ambassadors for peace. These competent lay men and women have been diligently working over the years for realistic

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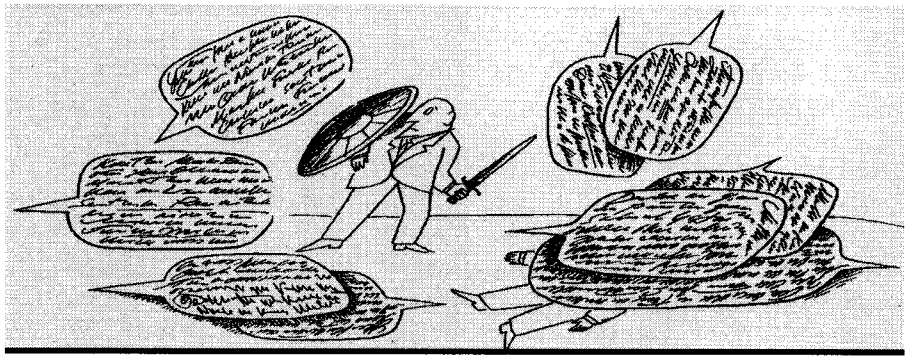

world unity as well as Christian unity. Impelled by their commitment to Christ, they try to establish "permeable borders" in society and in the church. Their efforts are as large as conflict resolution between warring nation-states (on both official and nonofficial levels), and as small as ecumenical cooperation in tending to shelters for the homeless, or addressing systemic injustice in local communities. Permeable borders, wherever they exist, depend on dialogue and shared action, and on participation and partnership. Fortitude, patience, and lots of prayer are required here.

I submit that a major challenge for the laity of the twenty-first century is to keep at it, to sustain commitment to "an ecumenical process of continuous interaction among whole bodies of believers, lay and ordained." This was one of the agreements of the recently concluded bilateral Roman Catholic/Reformed Church dialogue whose topic was the laity. The dialogue members recognized how hard this can be. So if a cup of Starbucks helps—Amen.

Dolores R. Leckey *is executive director of the Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

Dennis O'Brien

At the risk of being a crank or a regular columnist (there is a difference?), I would take some exception to Eugene McCarraher's *windig allzuwindig* characterization of the "velvet revolution" accomplished by the laity. Like most "revolutions" this one seems to me more a change in the direction of the breeze than the underlying current. I believe it was Henry Kissinger, during one of the gloomier periods of the Vietnam era and hangover, who commented that Americans had moved from shallow optimism to shallow pessimism without bothering to pass through reality.

I am not at all certain I agree with McCarraher's notion that there has been a lay-inspired "techno takeover" of the ancient church, but if that is the case, I would think we have passed from a "technology" of morals to a technology of "management" without passing through reality. The previous regime presented a moral bureaucracy which thought there was a clear casuistical solution to every moral dilemma; the new lay technology (as McCarraher characterizes it) dissolves dilemmas in the language of choice, flexible options, and final feel-good. In neither old casuistry nor new sentiment is there room to face the tragic dimension of life so eloquently evoked by John Garvey in the same issue.

Dennis O'Brien *is president emeritus of the University of Rochester and author of* All the Essential Half-Truths about Higher Education *(University of Chicago Press).*

Francis X. Meehan

Eugene McCarraher's "Smile, When You Say 'Laity'" was exhilarating. There seems to be emerging with ever greater clarity a third force among American Catholics—a force overdue—with *Commonweal* its foremost exponent. I used to try descriptions of this movement, "progressive but not liberal," or "critical but not conservative," but new articulations are putting flesh on the labels.

Where are the lineaments of such a force? Pieces here, pieces there. One thinks of Michael Baxter's effort to find a critical nonliberal path at Notre Dame, or Mary Ann Glendon standing with women and yet against narrower feminisms, or Paul Baumann's clairvoyance into the cant of James Carroll.

As a pastor attempting to be faithful to church and respectful to parishioners, I can only be grateful.

The Reverend Francis X. Meehan *is pastor of Saints Simon and Jude, West Chester, Pennsylvania.*

Walter Ong

In his perceptive and stimulating article, Eugene McCarraher interprets my advocacy in *Frontiers in American Catholicism* (1957) of "an apostolate of the business world" as a proposal "to replace the working-class apostolate." Consultation of my text will show that this is not the case. I proposed an apostolate to the business world not to replace the working-class or any other apostolates, but to supplement the ongoing apostolates of the Catholic church. I was making the point that the church (less in the United States than in Europe) had not been sufficiently evangelizing the business world, not addressing it as such, not making it aware of the gospel and of Jesus' teachings. This chapter appeared originally in French in the monthly *Etudes* (Paris, May 1952). In France, and in the rest of the West where long involvement with feudalism had sabotaged the church's awareness and evangelization of the world of commerce, of businessmen and business women, there was desperate need to bring the gospel to the attention of the commercial world as such and to those whose life was wrapped up in this world.

Walter J. Ong, S.J. *is university professor emeritus of humanities at Saint Louis University.*

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Paul Q. Kane

Although Eugene McCarraher asks good questions about the role of the laity in our era, after reading his article I found myself wanting more. This victory of the laity is precarious and is met with ambivalence among some segments of the Catholic population. As co-director of a lay-ministry formation program among native peoples of the Northwest, my involvement raises another set of concerns about the future of ministry in the community I serve.

Jesuits have ministered among Native Americans in the Northwest since the mid-nineteenth century, and the history of our interaction with the various tribes and bands is complex. It is fraught with contradictions: paternalism, appreciation, cooperation, accommodation, neglect, and abuse. Compunction and healing are necessary aspects of our formation program.

Today, we—the Jesuits and the Native Peoples—find ourselves in a state of Catholic schizophrenia concerning leadership roles in the faith community. Mixed messages from the past still haunt us; mixed messages in the present are still being sent by Jesuits who believe that the priest shortage is a myth and that priests "will always be with the people," and by other Jesuits like myself who do not believe there will be resident Jesuits or other priests on every reservation and in every urban community from eastern Montana to western British Columbia.

We also receive mixed messages from the dioceses in which we work; for example, whether Word and Communion services are appropriate for Native communities. These mixed messages are reflected back to us by the lay people we work with who desire more leadership roles for themselves and yet want ordained priests stationed in their parishes. The question that keeps coming up for us is, "We are training the laity; now what?"

In a perfect world, a structure which allowed for locally ordained Native men and women would be supportive of lay formation programs. In the real world, we continue to send mixed signals: inviting people to be leaders in their church communities and then reminding them that formal recognition of their leadership is not yet available. How should we proceed with prayerful, educated, and trained lay people who feel a calling to serve and are acknowledged as leaders in their local Catholic communities?

Among poor and marginalized peoples the victory of the laity is hardly assured, yet ministry is needed and there are not enough priests to provide it. The issue needs to be addressed openly in the church in the United States to assure a more coherent and just policy with regard to lay ministry as a necessary part of developing a "vision beyond the glittering imperium of consumer culture."

Paul Q. Kane, S.J., *is co-director of Kateri Northwest Ministry Institute in Spokane, Washington.*

Eugene McCarraher

To all the respondents, I raise a cup of Wawa's early morning swill. (That's a compliment, by my lights.)

I thank Schindler and Father Baxter for their noncorporate endorsements. Baxter rightly maintains that a clerical blessing of the managerial ethos has been and remains a necessary condition for the "lay" revolution. (Indeed, Father Heft supplies evidence on that score, asserting that corporate hegemony is a "providential development.") Father Ong properly chastises me for misinterpreting his call for a business apostolate as a replacement for the working-class apostolate. Still, I cite the extenuating circumstance of Ong's insouciance toward corporate power, a posture that I would argue is a defining feature of liberal Catholic cultural criticism in the 1950s.

Baxter's acuity counters the stale rehearsals of 1950s' liberalism in Leckey and Deedy, especially the latter. After changing the subject to the all-too-obvious sins of the clergy, Deedy winds up making me a defender of clerical Johns and harrumphing about my "fretting." While no one should downplay clerical vice and incompetence, I feel that Deedy—like those Japanese soldiers who holed up in caves for years, thinking that the war was still raging—continues to fight the battles of yesteryear. Since most of us now know that priests are fallible human beings, we can move on to confront today's troubles.

Other critics focus on what they perceive as my facile dismissal of American Catholics' economic and educational achievements. Far be it from me to pooh-pooh the sacrifices and aspirations of the grandparents David O'Brien invokes: However ambiguous their descendants' success, the brick-and-mortar ghetto was no city of God. Likewise, Cadegan and Allitt take me to task for overlooking both the divine presence and the real progress in contemporary Catholicism. To them I reply that I have no difficulty in seeing God's face in a middle manager, and that it is both impossible and undesirable to reclaim the "flinty austerities" of the past. I am just not convinced either that we should want to baptize TQM (as Elliott Gould cried out in *Little Murders*, "what the hell ever happened to standards?"), or that the amiability of the people Allitt and I know in our daughters' lay-run schools counters the ever-more uncharitable world of corporate capitalism.

Finally, I hope that Father Meehan is right in discerning a "third force" rising among American Catholics. The witness such a force would provide (one radiantly prefigured in the Catholic Worker movement) could indeed, as Cadegan writes, "startle us all." Here's hoping that all of us awaken from our undogmatic slumbers, and transform the laity's pyrrhic triumph into a spectacle unto the world. □

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YOU DO UNDERSTAND ABOUT DNR?

Don't you? Don't you?

Leslie Goerner

Four years ago, my mother underwent a routine hospital procedure to verify the suspected presence of an ulcer. Strong-willed in every inch of her five-foot frame, at seventy-three she had suffered no major health problems. Yet she was failing. For years we had been unable to persuade her to eat properly. Whenever I delivered homemade meals, often her own recipes, she'd take a few bites or say, "I'm not hungry right now. Just leave it in the fridge." The plate usually remained untouched. As her ailing joints began to make cooking a hardship, I applied to Meals on Wheels, which Mom promptly canceled. She didn't like gravy and couldn't trust anyone to remember not to serve it to her. Meanwhile, she kept an open bag of corn curls propped by her chair. In her kitchen I'd find a trail of wrappers from candy and packaged bakery goods. Throughout the day, she drank her coffee and munched her treats; she nibbled on quartered lunch-meat sandwiches, her mainstay. She weighed eighty-six pounds.

The night before the procedure, Dr. Austin (not his real name) visited my mother to describe an endoscopy. The test involved passing a flexible lighted tube through the mouth and esophagus into the stomach. He'd be finished in an hour, he assured her; she'd be home the following afternoon.

But that was not to be. Instead, routine turned into a fight for her life. In the waiting room, I listened as the doctor described how his patient had become nauseated. Vomiting, she had aspirated the contents of what should have been an empty stomach into her left lung. Immediately she had begun to struggle for breath. "This happens sometimes when the digestive system gets sluggish," he said. "The nurse should have checked before sending her down." Dr. Austin had ordered oxygen.

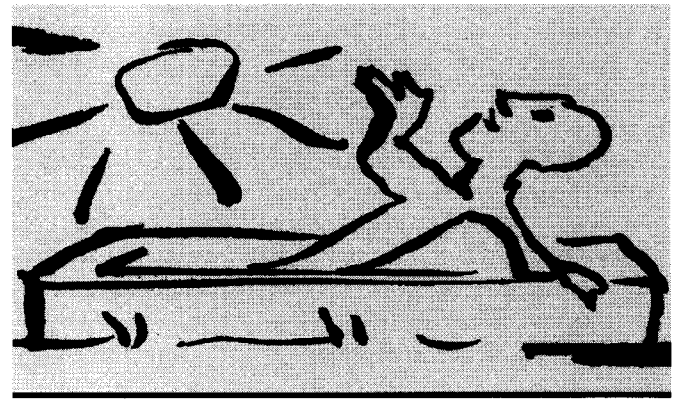
Although disturbed and saddened to hear of my mother's complications, I waited confidently for Dr. Austin to tell me how he proposed to clear her lung. Instead he asked: "Has your mother ever indicated her feelings regarding artificial life support?" My mind stalled; I must have gasped. "Sometimes," he offered quietly, "a person will make a comment to a family member about not wanting to be resuscitated."

Dr. Austin went on to explain that my mother might need the help of a respirator. Already, he said, he had contacted the intensive care unit (ICU) on the assumption that she had pneumonia, a typical result of aspirating foreign matter into the lung. Again he prodded: "I was just wondering whether your mother ever mentioned anything to you. About life support." Without quite knowing why, I lied.

I told him she hadn't discussed the matter with me. In fact, years earlier, I'd been with her when she consulted her lawyer about a "do not resuscitate" order (DNR). It was something she planned on signing but never had. Then, upon admission to the hospital the day before, she had received a form in her information packet: standard material for all incoming patients. She mentioned the option to me and said she probably ought to get it out of the way in the event that it might someday be needed. Again, she did not follow through.

"I do not wish to be kept alive by artificial methods." Commonly referred to as a living will, the DNR document directs professional caregivers to take no heroic measures in an effort to save a person's life. People typically associate DNR with terminal illness or critical injury, times when machines can become a hindrance to the process of mortal passage: no heroic measures. For legal purposes, the term includes the use of a respirator to pump oxygen into the lungs. It can also mandate the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration: food and water, intravenously provided. What many people do not understand about DNR—what my mother and I did not know—is the definition of "heroic" as it is carried out in practical application. Surely, I thought, aspirating into the lung would not qualify as a reason for halting efforts to help a patient breathe. Or would it?

Soon after Dr. Austin had delivered his news, I followed my mother, alert on her stretcher, up to the hospital's critical-care unit. Ignoring her muzzle-like oxygen mask, she kept issuing garbled instructions. As members of the ICU team wheeled her



Leslie Goerner, *a free-lance writer, lives in New Hartford, New York.*

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into Observation Room 3, she invested her last full gulp of air: "You're not going to run any more tests on me!"

"Don't worry, Mom," I called after her, "they won't." And then they closed the door.

Brought in on what had become my mother's "case," a lung specialist in his mid-thirties barely introduced himself before asking what was to be his only question: "I presume you've been told about DNR?"

Clearly, this was no rerun of "Marcus Welby, M.D.," where the mild-mannered hometown healer steps forward to battle the forces of death. "Why exactly are you even mentioning such a thing?" I asked. "You know what just happened to my mother. People don't have to die from spontaneous pneumonia, do they?" I had just inherited my mother's anger.

"She's severely anemic," he replied blandly.

"And that is a terminal illness?"

"Well, it could be irreversible."

Having evaluated the level of her distress, Dr. Austin made the decision to hook Mom up to an inhalator, but not before asking me a fourth time to consider a DNR order. At the main ICU desk, the hub of several curtained suites, I signed instead a legal permission slip to employ the inhalator; I prayed for my mother's full recovery

Two days later, no evidence had yet been found in Mom's bloodwork, x-rays, or the failed endoscopy to indicate any serious medical condition. Each of four specialists had a different theory, a unique approach. On one issue, however, they concurred: Mom had a life-threatening illness.

"She's much too thin—severely malnourished," they worried.

"She doesn't eat," I replied. "She's stubborn. And very particular."

After three days, Dr. Austin removed Mom from the respirator. Now she could start telling everyone just what she thought of this fiasco. Our lives could return to normal. At her bedside, I reminded her of everything that had happened. She nodded and mouthed the word, "Okay"—over and over again, "okay." But it wasn't; she wasn't. Even as we spoke, she grew visibly weaker.

I began at last to understand the extent of her peril. When, like a coach to a profoundly weary player, I urged her to *try*, to *inhale*, she whispered breathlessly, "I can't."

The attending nurse advised, "Stay close. You may be asked to sign something. In case of an emergency, we wouldn't want to be without instructions regarding your mother's care." The thought curdled in my mind: what if they couldn't locate me? Why couldn't I sign in advance? At that moment, I became connected to a machine.

Another round of blood work and x-rays confirmed what anyone could see; on her own, Mom still could not get enough air to oxygenate her blood.

The second time I signed for my mother to be assisted by a respirator, an ICU nurse said in a confidential tone, "Be sure to ask the doctor what it could mean. When you continue to put patients on a machine, you reduce their chances of breathing again without it."

As the ICU team prepared to insert the tube in her mouth, my mother, confused but still feisty, showed some resistance. "Do you want this?" one of the nurses asked kindly. Oxygen-deprived, disoriented, Mom had no idea what she needed or why. Yet we all stood by, waiting for her to take responsibility. Then from the other side of the bed, a burly attendant who had just been caring for my mother's needs looked earnestly at me and said, "If she doesn't go back on the respirator, you know what will happen."

"Of course she wants it," I gasped.

When, a week later, my mother failed for the third time to be weaned successfully from the respirator, her cardiac specialist expressed a different attitude: "Sooner or later," he admonished, "you'll need to make a decision about how far you want to carry this. What are you going to do when this happens again? Just think about it." For a moment, I felt selfish, unreasonable. But only for a moment.

The fact was, I *had* been thinking. A story had long since begun to play out in my mind, its setting a sterile hospital room where a woman slowly suffocates. Still conscious, still alert, but too weak to beg for mercy, she stares into the eyes of the daughter who has cut off her oxygen supply. As the dying woman grips with the strength of residual panic the hand of her betrayer, the daughter offers tearful prayers for recovery. Poe might have relished such a scenario. But I was reminded of the second chapter of James's epistle where he tells us that refusing to provide life's ne-

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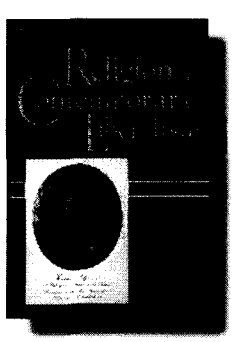

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David Kleinbard

The Family Doctor

The octogenarian can't look me in the eye.
His wife, young at sixty, steers his hand
From mouth to plate, then smiles at air.
Once family doctor, he shuffles from chair
To chair on knees of pain, waiting
For the unpredictable fall, the synapse lapse.
His slippers try the spiral stair.

At lunch he can't recall his thought.
It's not senility, at other times
His brain's in tune, but heaviness of after sleep
In one who dozes half the day.
Newspaper addict, he cancels *Post* and *Times*.
All afternoon the questions come to help:

How is my first wife's brother, once mad?
How is my wife's mother, who can't recall
That we have phoned or if she paid her rent?
How is my wife, who has been ill?
And how am I, whose train was late?
Far less remote than years gone by.

Gloomy Grammarians

Gloomy grammarians, phony liberals
In red and gray, in tweed and flannel,
Shockproof, downed, and gaberdined.
We go with friends to Maxwell's Plum.
Grizzled, dyed, we grope
Around old age. Our parents have lost
Their minds. My mother is curious
About the barefaced body in the glass.
There's nothing she can name.
Her son thinks she still loves
The tall intrusion at the door,
His vague image makes her smile.
But then she always has liked men.
Pacing the dank hall of the home, I have
Until four to give them all she has
Or take her back. My brother says
"No more! You'll have to do it all
Yourself." My brother who has spent
Many an hour of the last five years
Nursing, wiping, combing, washing her
Until despair has dwindled
Into this chaos of the newborn.
I take her home. At night she wanders
The house, turning spigots on, yanking
Out drawers, shrieking like a macaw
Wild, invisible above the Amazon
In joy, in rage, in misery.
Who knows? No nurse stays with me.

cessities is the epitome of a dead faith.

Day and night, I kept watch in my mother's room, where something worse than death was lurking. I did not stand guard alone.

"No more tests!" my mother had insisted. So followed weeks of disobedience: four CAT scans, a scoping of the heart, two more endoscopic procedures, countless blood tests attended by the installation of tubes to ease the process, daily x-rays of the lungs. There I was, signing permission for every one of them. I studied nuances from the night chart, written comments of doctors interpreted by sympathetic nurses. Emotions advanced and receded out of context. The sun rose on schedule; the moon and stars retained their midsummer patterns. My family upheld me with prayer, love, and constant thoughtfulness. But I felt numb, incompetent. All I could do, going out or coming in, awake or late at night reawakened, was pray: "Let my mother live. Please let her live!"

Two months after what was to have been a routine examination, my mother came home from the hospital. Kept alive by a respirator, then an oxygen mask, IV, and feeding tube, but in essence by the gracious will of God, she walked away from the obstacle course a still-frail woman not the slightest bit anemic, with one tiny ulcer already mending.

What-ifs that aim to reconstruct the past are vain illusion. Yet sometimes speculation can instruct the future. Had my mother signed the standard health-care proxy issued to every patient, would she have survived her ordeal? Or would doctors have been required by law to abide by "wishes" she would never have expected could end her life before the fight was lost? As medical specialists and staff continued to offer no hope for her recovery, might I at last have submitted, signed the DNR order, and so consented to her death? Might I in fact have caused it?

Other worries also shadow this near tragedy. Physicians today are being pulled in several directions at once. Their dedication to restoring health, traditionally the single focus of the medical profession, is being challenged by moral and ethical dilemmas caused by advancing technology and its enormous costs. Everyone, from health-care professionals to patients and their relatives, needs to be aware of the subtle ways in which legitimate concerns about costs and personal autonomy can erode care and even our regard for the sanctity of life.

Happily, for more than three years after this incident, my mother remained independent in her own home. She lived to celebrate the birth of two great-grandchildren and the ongoing support of her family. In 1996, she moved to a nearby nursing home where she made friends among fellow residents and staff. For the first time in years she was able to attend church regularly. She enjoyed the best of care.

My mother left this world just as morning was breaking. Moments before I arrived, she slipped away in her sleep. The head nurse said that, if such a thing exists, my mother's death was beautiful. □

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Who ruined New York?

The Future Once Happened Here
New York, D.C., L.A., and the Fate of America's Big Cities
Fred Siegel
The Free Press, $24, 260 pp.

Julia Vitullo-Martin

This is a brilliant and important book about how sixties' liberalism "in a series of great gambles regarding work, welfare, public order, and a common culture, reshaped the three great cities." Siegel chose these cities—New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles—because, he says, each had set not just its own but much of the national urban agenda.

Yet Siegel's choice has to make a reader pause before even beginning the book: New York, Washington, and Los Angeles? By no conventional standard is Washington a great city—it is small both in land and population, and it has virtually no economy beyond the government sector. Unlike other world capitals—Paris, London, Berlin, Madrid—Washington was never its own city. Washington was, to use one of Siegel's favorite attack words, "dependent" from the start. Nor has it ever set any part of the national agenda on its own terms. What influence it has exerted has been in its role as a federal colony.

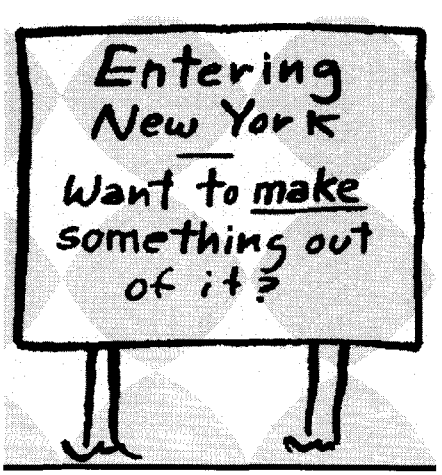
The country's third (or second!) great city is Chicago—the most beautiful and perhaps the most successful of the old industrial urban centers, having overcome the classic obstacles of middle-class flight and manufacturing job loss that have hit all American cities. Siegel stacks the deck for his argument by including Washington and ignoring Chicago.

He may have omitted Chicago for two reasons. The first is that the city of big shoulders has always marched to its own Midwestern drummer, sitting in splendid isolation on Lake Michigan's shore and caring little for national media influence. It is a great city that is content within its own boundaries. (According to local lore, Chicago politicians who found themselves in Mayor Richard M. Daley's disfavor during his 1955–76 reign were sent to Washington as punishment. Thus did Paul Douglas, for example, become a U.S. Senator.)

But the second reason is that Chicago undermines Siegel's thesis.

Siegel argues that what set American cities on their downward spiral was the liberal response to the black urban riots of the 1960s, particularly to the 1965 Watts riot. The violence spawned a "riot ideology," he says, and legitimated criminal behavior as not only justified but functional in rectifying the sins of racism. Mayors and civic leaders, backed by leading intellectuals, pressed the federal government for huge new programs to placate the rioters. Siegel calls this "peddling pathology."

Yet while the sins of Chicago's Mayor Daley were no doubt many, peddling pathology was not among them. Even as New York's Mayor John Lindsay was receiving national praise from what Siegel calls the "prestige press" for walking the streets of Harlem to calm its residents following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mayor Daley issued the Chicago police his notorious order to "shoot to maim or cripple anyone looting any stores in our city."



No one beyond Chicago's boundaries had a public word of praise for Daley—yet he was reelected twice more. As he said on reelection in 1974: "I always win." As a powerful Democratic city, Chicago managed to sustain a large government role before and after the riots without catering to riot ideology. And even though its huge government programs led to fiscal meltdown by the late 1970s, Chicago just doesn't fit Siegel's thesis.

Even Los Angeles, which Siegel covers compellingly, doesn't really fit the thesis. He devotes an entire chapter to L.A.'s horrifying "Police Politics," and concludes that L.A.'s highly decentralized political structure both freed it from the costs of an overextended government and helped produce the unaccountable police system that made it both the first city to experience a major postwar riot and the only city to experience two such riots.

What this book is really about is New York. It is a book propelled by the author's anger at what he sees as the destruction wreaked over the last three decades by white liberals setting the country's urban policy agenda, but particularly New York's.

Mayor Lindsay, Mayor Daley's opposite in every way, comes in for rough though not unfair treatment at Siegel's hands. He is the ultimate example of the liberal whose principles are "simultaneously morally libertarian and statist,"

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driven by both "antipathy to economic markets and faith in a free market in morals."

Part of Siegel's anger stems from his own love of cities, an intellectual's cry of "Look what they done to my song, Ma." He describes himself as a "son of New York City" who was "weaned on a pride for her accomplishments; now I am saddened by her decline, even as I hope for her renewal."

For there is little doubt that despite its much heralded renaissance as the financial capital of the world and the country's number-one international tourist destination, New York is in many ways a mess today—and probably always has been. A fabulous, flamboyant wreck of a great city. New York's precariousness cannot be attributed solely to the failure of liberalism, abysmal as Siegel thinks that failure may have been. It has self-destructed so many times that its triumphant perch at the pinnacle—despite its filth, noise, and pollution— has to be astonishing to onlookers. Watching New York is like watching the Flying Wallendas, but with cyclical crashes.

When I moved to New York from Southern California in 1973, one of Mayor Lindsay's deputy mayors admonished me: "The smart money's getting out." He was moving to Los Angeles, one of many top officials abandoning New York. It looked like the deputy mayor was right when New York's economy tanked in 1974, and hit its world-class fiscal crisis in 1975, when Wall Street's bond market just shut down on New York City's debt. The city had been a victim of extraordinarily irresponsible fiscal policies by its own as well as state officials.

Since then the city's economy has soared to great heights only to stall once again in 1990. And as the stock market flirts with disaster in late 1997, every New Yorker has to worry about just how badly their perennial boom-and-bust economy might fall. Even before the stock market's problems, the city's unemployment rate had stood at 9.3 percent, twice the national average. As Siegel notes, New York still retains its old, deadly combination of very high taxes and very low levels of public service. And despite Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's regular assurances that he is in full control of all aspects of life within the five boroughs, everyone knows that City Hall can do very little to improve the private economy.

What it can do, as this book shows effectively, is undermine the economy, turning a basically entrepreneurial city like New York into a dependent ruin like Washington. Washington remains the nation's most heavily subsidized city, says Siegel, as well as the only city with both falling employment and a rising crime rate.

Washington is not a great city, but it looms as a great city's nightmare, an example of just how bad social conditions can become even with a beautiful city plan, magnificent housing and boulevards, and steady employment via the government.

Siegel stacks the deck for his argument by using Washington rather than Chicago—or even Boston. But he's right enough.

Liberals are going to hate this book. They should read it anyway and ponder whether liberal good will plus hubris indeed led to two decades of urban disaster. □

Julia Vitullo-Martin, *a political scientist at the Vera Institute of Justice, edited* Breaking Away: The Future of Cities *(Twentieth Century Fund Press).*

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ENGRAVINGS FROM LIFE

David Jones
Special Issue,
The Chesterton Review,
February and May 1997
$25, 258 pp.

Edward T. Wheeler

David Jones (1895–1974) was a poet, watercolorist, and engraver, a fervent convert to Catholicism, a friend and associate of Eric Gill, and perhaps most tellingly, a scarred veteran of World War I. "A certain rising from the tomb" has to accompany the works of man, Jones wrote, and those words characterized his sacramental vision and the central place of the Mass in his life. Given Jones's relative obscurity, one has to wonder when his reputation will undergo a much-deserved awakening from the dead. W.H. Auden thought Jones's *The Anathemata* (1952) "probably the finest long poem written in English in this century." T.S. Eliot, in the introduction he wrote for *In Parenthesis* (1937), called it "a work of genius." No one, however, ever said Jones is an easy read.

As watercolorist and engraver Jones has few peers among twentieth-century British artists. Anglo-Welsh, he was received into the church by the Reverend John O'Connor who later received G.K. Chesterton. This special issue of *The Chesterton Review* is a belated celebration of the artist's birth, and although it preaches to the choir in a way, it makes a case for Jones's artistic significance which *Commonweal* readers should hear. There are pieces by the writer, reminiscences by those who were his closest friends, strong background articles which link him to *Chesterbelloc* and to the theology which shaped the age, and assessments of his standing as a plastic artist. The reproductions of Jones's wood engravings are particularly effective, and the strangely beautiful illuminated pages, inspired according to Jones by the I.N.R.I. inscription on the cross, are—strangely beautiful. The curious will have to travel to galleries in Britain to see the full effect of his watercolors. (There is no web site which hosts his images.)

A German machine gun made suffering a defining fact for Jones; he was wounded at the Battle of the Somme. The horror of the war has been redefined for us in so many novels, poems, and films, that Jones's unique response makes his books and his paintings revelatory. In some literal sense Jones came to understand his wounding in battle, his fall on that French battlefield, as drawing him down into a Roman and Roman Catholic past. As a Welshman, London born and raised, he saw in his Celtic heritage a direct link to Roman Britain and to a Christian tradition which had retreated into Wales. The tradition he embodies in his poetry and in his visual art is many tongued and has many visual sources, Latin, Welsh, English, old, middle and modern; his books and his illuminated pages move bewilderingly at times from one language or epoch to the next. The controlling figure that emerges in his *making*, his *poesis*, as he would say, is the Cross; indeed, the rood or tree of life is the intersection of meaning for Jones, the meaning of his own suffering—life-long depression and two nervous breakdowns—and the meaning of his art.

Jones wrote once of a chance discovery: stumbling on a shed somewhere off the battlefield, he disturbed a priest saying Mass for soldiers. Whatever that moment brought in surprise to him then, it wasn't until after the war that he sought instruction in the faith. He was received into the church in 1921. So for Jones, Catholicism was an active soliciting of the revealed truth, and liturgy had for him the full power of an efficacious sign. Moreover, deeply affected by the sacramental theology of the French Jesuit Maurice de la Taille, Jones saw in the sacrifice of the Mass the transcendent form of all artistry. For Jones, the artistic is the sacramental, and the re-presentation of art, which is the making of signs, is a form of divine activity. In the preface to *The Anathemata* he explains what the poem "is about": "In a sense the fragments that compose this book are about, or around and about, matters of all sorts which, by a kind of quasi-free association, are apt to stir in my mind at any time and as often as not 'in time of the Mass.'"

Jones's most widely read and accessible book, *In Parenthesis*, is a rendering of the life of one John Ball, an infantry private, whose experience of war parallels that of the writer. That novel-poem is undoubtedly the place to begin reading Jones. His book of essays, *Epoch and Artist*, offers a direct approach to Jones's understanding of life and art. At his most difficult, Jones's verbal art drags the associative properties of language to the fore. He makes words self-evidently signs and then offers clues to their referents in elaborate notes. The long poem, *The Anathemata*, especially challenges even the most determinedly friendly admirer on every level. For example, but a few pages into section 1 we face,

> All the efficacious asylums
> in Wallia vel in Marchiea Walliae
> ofofau of, that cavern for
> Cronos, Owain, Arthur.
> Terra Walliae!
> Buarth Meibion Arthur!
> Enclosure of the Children of
> Troy!

There are four explanatory notes for these lines. (Only four!) But there are also substantial critical studies which can guide one not only through the obscurities but to the revelations—and many there are—of the poem. As this issue of *The Chesterton Review* attests, readers who can manage the effort are rewarded in kind. □

Edward T. Wheeler *is dean of the faculty at the Williams School in New London, Connecticut.*

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

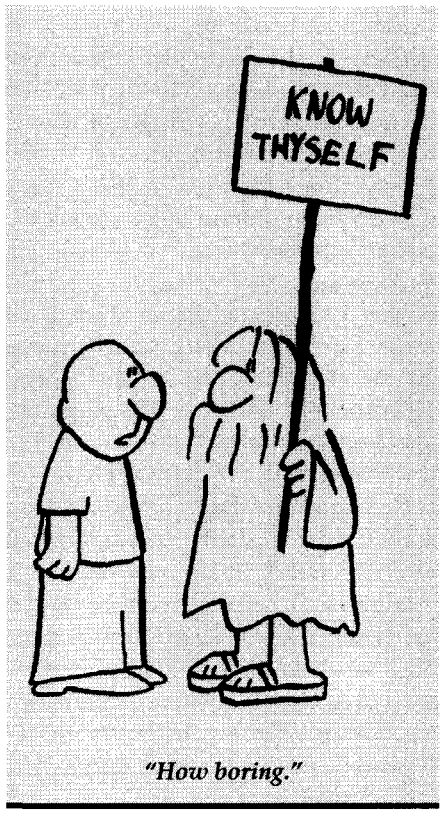
Lawrence S. Cunningham

Robert Wuthnow relies both on published quantitative data and field research on a number of middle-class churches. Over twenty denominations are represented. As a result, Wuthnow feels rather confident of the following three conclusions: (1) There is a serious economic problem facing American churches, (2) the reasons for this crisis are both related to the larger economy and spiritual, and (3) there are solutions to this crisis which will not only help the churches but aid the larger commonweal. That solution requires that churches learn how to support the middle-class membership that is the backbone of American Christianity. In addition, Wuthnow has much to say about how churches think in specifically theological ways about money and economic matters.

Wuthnow examines pastoral strategies, questions of stewardship and tithing, and the theologies that undergird church giving and spending. The responsibilities of the churches to the poor are also covered. Wuthnow points out that most middle-class churches—he studied both Catholic and Protestant denominations—were founded on the assumption that the congregants had a lot of leisure time. He reminds us of how much volunteer work women once did for churches and how two-career families have changed this equation. The increased professionalization of the ministerial staff, from music ministers and ministers of education to office managers, creates enormous expense and high expectation. To cut a position is often to invite some people to worship elsewhere. Even the "megachurches" depend financially on constant increases in the size of the congregation, thus sometimes creating the ecclesiastical equivalent of a Ponzi scheme. The bottom line for all churches, however, is that parish receipts lag far behind the rising income of the middle class.

The Crisis in the Churches: Spiritual Malaise, Fiscal Woe
by Robert Wuthnow
Oxford University Press, $30, 291 pp.

For all of the research that Wuthnow put into this book, it is amazing to me that most of what he found, at least from my perspective as an observer of the Catholic scene, could have been deduced from personal observation, conversation, and an eye toward Catholic publications. He does not have any startling hypotheses (like Andrew Greeley) about why people don't give more. His observations that many middle-class people have either overly materialistic expectations or good reason for a sense of malaise seem plausible but hardly original. Nor does Wuthnow discuss in any depth the worrisome financial problems of, say, caring for aging religious women or the negative impact of paying judgments in sexual abuse cases. After having worked through this somewhat repetitious book, with its longish reportage of what various pastors had to say about money and the church, I was somewhat unfairly reminded of a quip of the late Eric Sevareid: sociology is sometimes just slow journalism.



"How boring."

I highly recommend Coriden's brief and readable work to everyone involved in a parish. For one thing, it sets out quite clearly the sometimes confusing financial mechanics and structures (at least for North America) of parish and diocesan life. As the author notes, this is not a "how-to" book nor an extended canonical commentary but a survey that treats of the historical development of parishes. The theological significance of the parish in the light of recent writings in ecclesiology, the rights and obligations of parishes under Canon Law, and a useful summary of American law as it impinges on Catholic parishes are some of the areas touched on.

The Parish in Catholic Tradition: History, Theology, and Canon Law
by James Coriden
Paulist Press, $12.95, 133 pp.

"Parishes and other local congregations are not like the branch offices or local outlets of a central corporation, as local banks or auto agencies or service stations often are," Coriden reminds us. "They are unique communities of Christian people." What this means in practice is that the parish is the primary instantiation of the church and not merely an extension of higher hierarchical realities. Of course there is a bond of unity between the local pastor, his bishop, and all bishops with the bishop of Rome. Coriden's observations on these questions would make a fine preliminary start for a consideration of J.M. Tillard's extraordinary recent book on ecclesiology, *L'Eglise locale*—a book that I hope will appear in English soon. Tillard's work, like that of other ecclesiologists, for example, Joseph Komonchak, draws out in detail what Coriden says briefly but clearly about the centrality of the local church.

Coriden also points out that the new Code of Canon Law sets out a whole se-

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ries of parishioner rights as well as procedures to insure those rights. Coriden's insistence on these rights is not meant to add fuel to the already overdeveloped litigious instincts of Americans, but to underscore the fact that congregations are not supine subjects. Among the rights of Catholics are: the right to having the Word of God preached; the sacraments administered; the Eucharist confected; adequate religious instruction, etc.

This modestly sized work, economic in price, should be in the hands of every parish staff member, including pastors. Coriden even provides an appendix featuring a few case studies that allow the reader to apply canonical legislation to specific problems. The index is adequate and each chapter has a brief list of books and articles in English for further reading.

Father Bausch is a retired parish priest and prolific author. I must admit that his

The Parish of the Next Millennium
by William J. Bausch
Twenty-Third Publications, $14.95, 288 pp.

machine-gun prose style put me somewhat on edge. His writing is peppered with snippets from magazines, bullets setting out statistics, selections from other books with references, anecdotal narratives about horror stories from the daily press, bad jokes, and odds and ends of Catholic trivia. No bibliography is provided, but there are some thoughtful points for reflection at the ends of the chapters.

If somewhat rattled by the style, I nevertheless found Bausch's basic point compelling. His thesis, in short, is that the church is in sad shape and its travails mirror the larger culture. Nonetheless, Bausch is no hand-wringer and he finds some hopeful signs for the future.

Essentially, Bausch uses a variation of Baron von Hügel's famous argument that Christianity must balance three basic elements: the institutional or hierarchical, the doctrinal or prophetic, and the mystical or priestly. Bausch traces these categories along a number of possible future trajectories.

The questions appended to the chapters are meant for group discussion in a parish setting, and it is in the parish that I think this book might be used most profitably. Bausch's view of the future may be summed up thus: The institutional church will (must) become more lay oriented; grounded in baptism and charism rather than in ordination and office; parishes will be more relational and less defined by numbers; there will be an inexorable move away from pyramidal to community-based life. Moreover, the intellectual/prophetic character of the church will focus increasingly on the wisdom tradition and parishes will be less program-oriented and more focused on the nurturing of spirituality in the best sense of the word. Bausch predicts a swing back to a more traditional emphasis on the iconic, which means an end of those barren church auditoriums built in the last thirty years. Finally, in what is obviously an ideal characterization, he envisions the future parish as a kind of counterbalance to the more priestly religion of the past. The parish itself will consist primarily of witness and service and the priest will operate more out of weakness than power. Shared and collaborative ministries will be encouraged by an episcopacy with a keener sense of subsidiarity and collegiality.

The title of Curran's book may tempt only those interested in moral theology, American Catholic intellectual history, or a combination of the two. The three different approaches of the subtitle refer

The Origins of Moral Theology in the United States: Three Different Approaches
by Charles E. Curran
Georgetown University Press, $24.95, 311 pp.

to the work of three priest-scholars, active in the United States in the late nineteenth century: the Italian-born Jesuit Aloysius Sabetti (died 1898); the Belgian-born Thomas Boquillon who taught at The Catholic University until his death in 1902; and John Hogan, an Irish-born but French-educated priest, who taught both in Boston and at The Catholic University until his death in 1901. As Curran notes, these three priests, who at one time lived within fifty miles of each other, had quite different views on the teaching of moral theology. Sabetti was a manualist with a keen interest in casuistry. Boquillon was more theoretical and speculative as a thinker, with a deep interest in fundamental moral issues. Hogan's reflections on seminary education were quite critical of the manualist tradition.

Curran analyzes in some depth the writings of all three men as well as offers a concise and illuminating history of the development of moral theology, with special attention to the influence of Alphonsus Liguori (died 1787). Though scholarly, this study should be of interest to anyone concerned with theology. First, Curran's close reading of the texts reminds us that all moral theology before Vatican II was not neoscholastic. Nor were all moral theologians, even those in the "manualist" tradition, rigorists with an undue interest in sexual matters. In fact, moral theologians did their work from different premises and employed a variety of methodologies. Even though moral theology was mostly oriented toward the education of future confessors, there were real moral questions that demanded real moral discrimination.

Second, this book amply demonstrates the limits to Thomism and the degree to which moral theologians leaned on casuists who favored the moral theology of Liguori. Likewise, it is in the nineteenth century that theologians had to sort out what was meant by the "ordinary magisterium" of the pope (a term first used by Pius IX) as well as what weight must

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be given to the pronouncements of the Holy Office on doctrinal and moral issues. In other words, a careful reading of Curran helps frame issues in ecclesiology as well as questions in the development of moral theology.

Finally, Curran shows how one can benefit from reading even rather unpromising material (Latin textbooks) if you have the right questions in mind and the right historical knowledge at hand. Rather than making a caricature of the older casuist approach or lamenting the sterility of the "scholastic" method, Curran is able to show how a compelling moral vision was derived from a model of morality rooted in a framework of law. This legal model was amenable to the syllogism, but it possessed its own limitations and inevitably left some areas of Christian morality unexplored. The moral theology of this period was, in Bernard Lonergan's phrase, "classicist." It is especially interesting to see how Hogan sensed the need for a more historically nuanced approach. Had Hogan written after the 1890s there is every chance, as Curran notes, that he would have been condemned as a modernist.

In an epilogue, Curran looks back irenically to the times of these three American professors. Judging their legal approach to moral theology inadequate, he calls for a more holistic framework (none of the three authors studied, for instance, ever thought of human experience as an important element of moral reasoning), and encourages a model of moral reasoning that stresses relationality and responsibility. Finally, Curran notes that moral theology was mainly practical and legal because Rome encouraged the use of Liguori (who had been named a "Doctor of the Church" during the reign of Pius IX) to the detriment of a more rounded theological approach of Thomas Aquinas. What is needed, Curran concludes, is a Catholic "both/and" approach that is rooted far deeper than in the matrix of law and that combines a broad theological set of principles with genuine attention to individual cases. The burning contemporary ethical issues just in the area of medicine and technology illustrate how correct Curran is.

It is no secret that religious communities, especially women's religious communities defined in the traditional

Pathways to Re-Creating Religious Communities
by Patricia Wittberg, S.C.
Paulist Press, $14.95, 266 pp.

canonical sense, are in crisis, at least in the West. Membership is in precipitous decline, the population of those who remain ages, and few communities can boast of many new recruits. This situation has been addressed by astute commentators such as Sandra Schneiders. Wittberg's book is not a consideration of the crisis but a discussion of the possibilities, desirability, and practical strategies for the founding or re-founding of religious communities. As a sociologist, she has studied nascent communities, and in her final pages she provides some profiles (thinly disguised) of both male and female communities in the United States as models for discussion.

Wittberg, herself a religious sister, reminds us that religious communities have had a long history in the church, and that not all have ancient pedigrees. Active congregations of sisters, for example, are largely a post-Enlightenment phenomenon who have had some monastic usages grafted onto their life. Many religious orders are of post-Tridentine origin and a fair number derive their charism from the French school of spirituality of the seventeenth century. Such congregations should not be confused with the more venerable contemplative orders who possess a much clearer idea of what their life should be and how they should live it. Even the traditional monastic orders in the West, however, have had good reason to go back to their sources. As a prominent Cistercian abbot once remarked to me, ecclesiology after Vatican II presents a real theological challenge to those who wish to live the *vita regularis*. The same dilemma confronts the mendicants and the religious orders in general.

As a sociologist, Wittberg is aware of this complexity. The most interesting part of her book, the second half, concerns itself with the opportunities and pitfalls of actually imagining how religious communities might start and, perhaps, flourish. This question leads her, at the end of each chapter, to provide a checklist of problems that need be squarely faced if one is not to fall prey to a kind of romanticism (padding about in sandals with Gregorian chant playing in the background), or to a theological naiveté (what constitutes a serious theology of vows would be a good theological reflection-starter), or to a desire to replicate past strategies without asking whether or not they are merely historical epiphenomena or somehow truly implicated in an authentic version of religious life. And as always, there is the problem of a charismatic leader who attracts people to his or her person but perhaps not to a genuine vision of gospel life.

This book exudes a realistic optimism, and I share its hopefulness. Although it is true that many traditional ways of ordering religious congregations have seen their day, it is also true that new experiments are aborning. A few may succeed. Anyone who has read much church history realizes that this has always been the case. When the Gregorian reform began to take root there was an impassioned debate about the nature of the experiments. This led some devoted souls to reimagine monastic life, others to test the eremitical vocation, the life of poverty, or the imposition of a regular life on canons. Lay groups such as the Patarines in Milan and, later, the Beguines, took shape. The same energies were present in the period after the Reformation, in the post-Enlightenment period, and earlier in this century. It is also happening today. As people attempt this re-imagining of religious life they may well wish to use Wittberg's book as a kind of checklist for ways to proceed and ways not to. In the interim, we should not count out all of the traditional orders. A few years ago, according to Wittberg, the Jesuits had 40 entering novices in the entire United States, but Indonesia had over 350. That is a fact worth pondering. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

percentage of registered Catholics attending services weekly. We, however, wanted to know whether standard surveys overstate weekly church attendance. Answering *that* question required calculating attendance as a proportion of the self-identified Catholic population.

It is worth restating our conclusion: Although surveys based on individuals' reports of their own behavior routinely show that approximately 50 percent of self-identified Catholics and approximately 40 percent of self-identified Protestants attend church in any given week, we showed that the actual weekly attendance rates for self-identified Catholics and Protestants are more like 27 percent and 20 percent respectively. Weekly church attendance in the U.S. is much lower than it is generally believed to be. This conclusion stands firm.

MARK CHAVES
Chicago, Ill.

The writer is a visiting associate professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Part of the research project discussed here was carried out at the University of Notre Dame.

The writer replies:

It's a classic case of "He said, she said!" Either Mark Chaves gave the assurances I described, or he did not. I do not have any smoking gun in the form of written assurances or statements of intent. I can say, however, that from the time I first spoke with Chaves, it was my clear understanding that the dioceses which agreed to provide him with the data he requested would not be identified by name in any published article. I shared that understanding of Chaves's data needs and the conditions of my cooperation with my counterparts in the Rockford, Cincinnati, and New York dioceses. Ruth Doyle, director of pastoral planning for New York, reports that she understood herself to have reached the same agreement with Chaves. It's conceivable, I suppose, that Doyle and I and other diocesan researchers affiliated with the Catholic Research Forum all wildly misinterpreted what we were told. Conceivable, but not likely enough to warrant Chaves's flat statement that my allegation was "simply false."

On the question of the quality of data: A major point in my September 12 letter to *Commonweal* was that the use of the October Mass attendance counts in sociological research is fraught with perils for the unwary. Although Chaves contends that the counts he used were of uniformly high quality, anyone who has ever worked in a parish or a diocesan office knows that the counts are only as good as the individual usher or sacristan or choir director in each parish who takes the count and sends it (or doesn't) to the chancery.

Chaves's faith in the reliability of one year of Mass count data from a nonrandom sample of just over one-fourth of U.S. dioceses is admirable but misplaced, and was the major focus of my letter to him requesting that he omit the Seattle data from his report. Quite simply, I felt (and continue to feel) that he misunderstood the limitations of the data we supplied, and I did not want the inclusion of Seattle's data to imply that we agreed with his methodology or interpretation.

Finally, Chaves seems uncertain about what he was trying to do through his research, and thus confuses many of the issues around Mass counts and Mass attendance rates. The aim of his research, he writes, was to test the accuracy of attendance rates generated by surveys. This stated purpose was a limited one and could arguably be addressed using the data he had available to him. However, after Chaves found that reported attendance ranged from 15.9 percent to 67 (!) percent of self-identified Catholics in his sample dioceses, he reported an overall average and never discussed why the dioceses differed so radically from one another and why the computed average differed so substantially from more than fifty years of data collected by Gallup and others. A study whose proclaimed purpose was to investigate the accuracy of current methods of estimating attendance—a matter of interest to few people other than church researchers—resulted in a flat statement of the number of "Catholics" attending Mass each week.

This was a conclusion much more interesting to the larger world and naturally garnered some media attention. To say church attendance is "lower than generally believed" is one thing; to say it is 27 percent is another. This number is now the coin of the realm (witness recent ads for the *New Oxford Review*). It shouldn't be. Additional research needs to be done on Mass attendance, but it must use accurate, comparable data and appropriate reference points so that both sociologists and parish/diocesan planners can use the results with confidence.

MARY BETH CELIO
Seattle, Wash.

From the editors: This correspondence is now closed.

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BARE-CHESTED CHRISTIANITY

P. E. Cruise

Don't get me wrong. I wholeheartedly join in Frank McConnell's (October 10, 1997) ruling on the merits of ABC's religious soap opera, "Nothing Sacred." Insofar as television can be good—and my tastes are too mainstream to feel any serious need to apologize for the medium per se—this is good television. My only purpose in coming at this thing from a distinctly female perspective (several of my women friends are devoted to the show) is to offer you some reasons why you should put in an hour on Thursday nights to watch it. After all, you could be gathering stunning insights from Karl Rahner or worrying about the collapse of the Asian markets....

My additional reasons for tuning in? Jim Mullen's witty/catty (I never miss it) "Hot Sheet" item on "Nothing Sacred" (*Entertainment Weekly*, September 26, 1997) hints at them: "A new show about a young, unorthodox, poker-playing priest...." Mullen pauses, slyly, wickedly, then hoots, "A *young* priest? Maybe on 'The X-Files.'" Science fiction aside, Mullen's blurb raises serious theological questions. The bearded, bespectacled reverend recruited by *TV Guide* (October 18-24, 1997) from Our Lady of Malibu (no, that's not a misprint) parish to discuss the series gives his age as fifty-four. By contrast, the (alas!) fictional Father Ray ironically admits to his former lover (in fact, she still loves him; but wait, I'm getting to that) that he's just turned thirty-four. "One year older than Jesus. If I were doing my job right, I'd be dead by now." Did I mention that broad-shouldered, luxuriantly-tressed Kevin Anderson, whose Father Ray looks like he spends a fair amount of his spare time weight training, just happens to make the self-deprecating comparison with Jesus while (gulp!) stripped to the waist?

O.K., so here's the punch line. No, this isn't *The Thorn Birds*. This is weekly, prime-time, network television about, well, incarnational spirituality. I kid you not. It's not for nothing that "Nothing Sacred" has Jesuit advisers. They read Karl Rahner so you don't have to. (Unless, of course, you want to.) My guess is these particular Jesuits are knee-deep in Rahner's principle of "mediation." Nothing (that is, no one thing) is sacred because everything is sacred.

And I do mean *everything*. The persistent love between Gemma (his old flame) and Father Ray is alternately frustrating and healing, as much a source of inspiration as temptation. In one memorable scene, Wendy Gazelle, at once luminous and (almost painfully) lucid as Gemma, asks the spiritually troubled Ray, "Can you feel how much God loves you?" "No." A slight shake of the priest's chestnut mane. It falls, unruly, past his collar, brushing stray fibers of a hand-knit wool sweater. (Everything about Father Ray is so agonizingly *touchable*.) She lays her palms, ever-so-lightly, on his shoulders. "Can you feel how much I love you?"

By episode's end, Gemma has the bittersweet satisfaction of hearing the man she loves lift his voice in an ancient prayer: "I bind myself to God in the sun and the moon and the stars." There is no space here to consider whether his ex-lover's wise-and-effective support of Ray's priesthood offers an implied critique of celibacy. But, if this isn't "mediation" with a capital "M," what is?

Could the same scene play out between a Ray and Gemma aged fifty? Sorry, but no. Biology dictates that Ray and Gemma generate a passion distinct from the passion of older lovers. They can make choices—career choices, reproductive choices, that another twenty years will foreclose to them. They are old enough that the choices they *might* make are heart-rendingly complicated, young enough that the choices they *have* made are not irrevocable. I think that it is in just such choices that we are likely to encounter God, in ourselves and in each other.

In his review, McConnell points out that "Nothing Sacred" is, after all, a television series that "mainly wants you to buy the sponsor's product." Among all the sacred canons of advertising, none is more familiar or more time-honored than "Sex Sells."

For the record, I submit that Father Ray's physical beauty, lovingly caressed by the camera, operates in reciprocal relationship to his body as consecrated symbol. When Gemma unexpectedly confronts Ray's near nakedness, we are meant to catch our collective breath along with her. We feel that shock of desire paralyzed by unease—not so much guilt as a sense of being out of place. Such moments in our human experience parallel the "awe" Rudolf Otto (O.K., so some nights I do skip television) described as the primal response to the holy.

Admittedly, I am alluding to visual/spiritual effects that some viewers may be ill-equipped to appreciate. The downside for me of watching "Nothing Sacred" is that it is a little like stepping into a time warp. The youthful, troubled Father Ray and angry, ardent Sister Maureen—still hoping to find the way to her own embodiment of *imago Christi*—occasionally strike me as sad ghosts of a more hopeful time, before so many of their real-life counterparts made their own hard choices and, however reluctantly, walked off the set. □

P.E. Cruise *is a practicing attorney. She is currently pursuing a graduate degree in theology.*

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TOP-TEN REASONS FOR WATCHING 'NOTHING SACRED'

Peter Feuerherd

Okay. I admit it. I like Father Ray. In the Catholic world, even the defenders of ABC television's "Nothing Sacred" have had to gently tiptoe around the central character, for fear that the Catholic League would rip into them for promoting heresy. Bill Donohue, the Catholic League president, sends faxes to newspapers around the country which hum every Friday with the reasons why Father Ray is the greatest danger to the faith since cross-dressing Jewish comedian Milton Berle provided competition for Bishop Sheen.

But to borrow from that other TV character, Ellen, I am now out of the closet. Damn the faxes and full-steam ahead. I watch the show nearly every week—missing only one episode to date—and am proud to share my top-ten list of why Father Ray is a good priest:

10. He works hard and is always on the edge of exhaustion. I like a pastor who pushes himself. The job is structured so that the boss—the bishop—is usually far away. So the fact that Father Ray doesn't take it easy is good to see. He is self-motivated.

9. When he does take a day off, he plays basketball instead of golf. We have enough clergy who play golf, an ecologically damaging sport in which fertilizers are used to ruin God's green earth. Basketball is a way to learn teamwork, coordination, and to find out something about the urban proletariat. Besides, it takes real conditioning and youth. If we had more priests playing basketball, we'd have a younger clergy, or a lot more shattered knees and ruptured tendons.

8. When there's a fight in the soup-kitchen line, he's ready to get in and break it up. He's a blessed peacemaker, ready to get his cassock dirty in the process. Father Ray is a real defender of the poor, all in the tradition of Father Karl Malden in *On the Waterfront*.

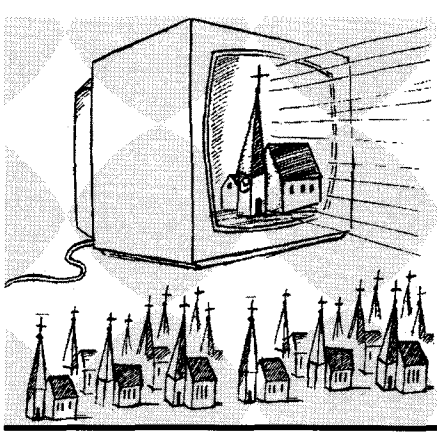
7. He's got good taste in music. Here's a rock-era priest who likes Lena Horne and Frank Sinatra, illustrating a respect for tradition and melody at the same time.

6. He prays, he talks to God, in living color and on network television in prime-time. He believes it can actually make a difference.

5. He chews out slumlords. As a New York City tenant, I'm partial to those who would defend us as an aggrieved group. I've lived in rodent-infested buildings and never had the support of my pastor, although I doubt his influence on a fallen-away Buddhist landlord would have had much impact. Still, I'd like to have Father Ray on my side.

4. He's prolife. In episode number four, he tells a girl contemplating abortion that the world needs a child from a wonderful person like her. Her name is Rachel, an allusion to the Hebrew Scripture's citation about the woman who weeps for her lost children. Father Ray is gentle, not strident, and although it's not effective in the long run—Rachel has the abortion—Mother Teresa once noted that we are called to be faithful, not necessarily effective.

3. He's true to his celibate calling. Here we have a handsome priest who is tempted, yet keeps his pants on. Score one for chastity, which you can't say for those "Friends" who provide Father Ray's major network competition.



2. He can't lie. No weaseling from Father Ray. He tells you what he thinks, which gets him in trouble on the show and is the main cause of his problems with his real-life opponents.

And, finally, the number-one reason why Father Ray is a good priest is that he regularly admits to doubts, but says everything comes together when he celebrates Mass. He is a walking sacramental catechetical lesson in which the church rituals surrounding Eucharist, marriage, and reconciliation come alive each week for viewers, all woven together via scriptural threads.

Unfortunately, Father Ray's television days appear to be numbered. His ratings are abysmal, frightened sponsors have caved to Dr. Donohue, and the show may well be over the heads of those who are not immersed in Catholic symbolism and theological thought. Fornicating hip young adult "Friends" will always garner higher ratings.

Still I'm willing to start a Father Ray fan club. I like my current pastor at my parish in Queens so I don't look forward to his ever being replaced. But if Father Ray ever needs a place, I wouldn't mind his being assigned to my parish. Administration may not be Father Ray's forte; he does seem to get overly tense about money matters. So maybe he's not such a great pastor and administrator. But a nice little niche as an associate in an urban parish may be just what he needs.

Maybe then the Friday faxes will fall silent, peace will reign in religious press newsrooms across the country, and the Catholic League will move on to some other more deserving target. □

Peter Feuerherd *is assistant editor of the* Long Island Catholic *and a free-lance writer.*

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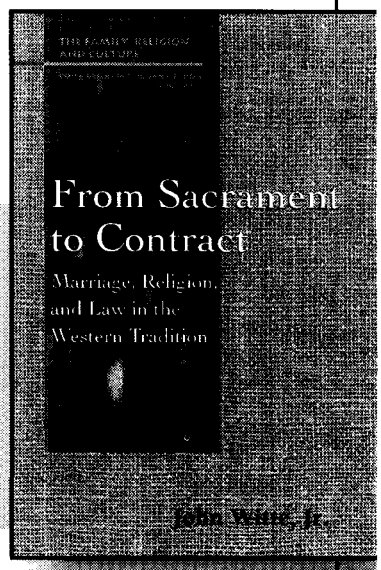

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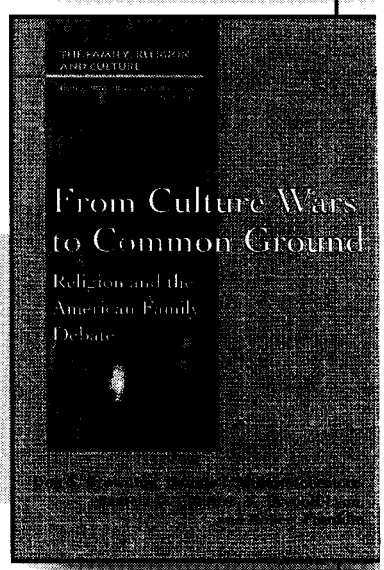

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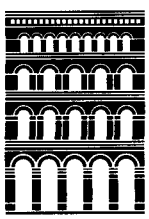

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